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Sorting Through the Junk Box
Dickens's Objects and the Great Exhibition of 1851

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Liberal Arts
Department of Humanities and Cultural Studies
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Date of Approval:
November 1, 2011

Keywords: Philanthropy, Sanitation, Genre, Foucault, Stuff

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ABSTRACT

In *Bleak House*, Dickens satirizes contemporary conditions in London in order to diagnose what he sees as social and industrial ills to prescribe a solution to the “Condition-of-England” question. Beginning with a review of the topicality in the novel, I use Dickens’s personal letters, the text of *Bleak House*, and articles from *Household Words* to explain his contempt with the Great Exhibition, misguided philanthropy, and sanitary conditions, among others. Ultimately, it is his anathema to the Great Exhibition which drives both Dickens’s plot and the issues he explores. Dickens’s mockery of England is refracted and emphasized through his use of multiple genres. I seek to illuminate how the varieties of genres frame the plot trajectory as well as Dickens’s subtle solution to London’s problems. Using Michel Foucault’s discussion of the discourse of discipline, I explain how *Bleak House* employs the Gothic novel, the Detective novel, and the Romance novel to influence the reader towards a more ordered and dutiful society. I end with an examination of the objects in *Bleak House*, concluding that objects symbolize not only characters’ roles, but also their psyches.

INTRODUCTION

This seemed to me too profound a joke.

- Charles Dickens¹

In a letter to a friend, Dickens professes an engagement with the idea for a new novel which hovers about him in a ghostly manner.² It is the inadequate legal system which haunts him. Perturbed by his involvement in and with it, he centers the novel on the law's deficiencies. In his preface, Dickens explains why he disparages Chancery in the following pages:

A few months ago, on a public occasion, a Chancery Judge had the kindness to inform me, as one of a company of some hundred and fifty men and women not laboring under any suspicions of lunacy, that the Court of Chancery, though the shining subject of much popular prejudice (at which point I thought the Judge's eye had a cast in my direction), was almost immaculate. There had been, he admitted, a trivial blemish or so in its rate of progress, but this was exaggerated . . . This seemed to me too profound a joke.³

Not only are the disillusionments of Chancery and its supporters thoroughly represented in the novel, but also the extent of Chancery's influence and the severity of its destruction are amplified by the amount of characters affected by it. While Dickens admits that there is an embellished and fantastical side to his narrative, he insists that it is "within the truth."⁴ The satirical strain of the novel is amplified by the validity of his vexations (Chancery's proceedings do prove to be obsolete) ,and the familiarity of the prototypes for his characters, such as Bucket who is the fictional version of Detective Charles Field or Jo who is based upon a crossing-sweeper named George Ruby. Even the Hortense murder plot has similarities to the Maria Manning murder trial.⁵

The immediacy not only of the characters but also of the themes in the novel is significant to understanding its satirical objective. The totality of London's struggles represented in Dickens's

Bleak House is remarkable. Victorian literature scholar, John Butt notes the contemporaneousness of the novel: "Of the five subjects to which the *Times* kept recurring during the months immediately preceding the inception of *Bleak House*, three take a prominent place in the novel, and one of the remaining two is memorably represented."⁶ The historical relevance of *Bleak House* to understanding, in part, the development of Victorian attitudes cannot be ignored. New historicist Catherine Gallagher observes that literary texts can be read "as constituents of historical discourses" that can enlighten readers to discourses, displays of power, and constructions of subjectivity.⁷ Instead of focusing on literature as separate from history, New Historicism uses each to inform the other.⁸ New Historicism actively seeks to read "literature *in* history," often exploring the variegated modes of power displayed in the text.⁹ Studies on Dickens have shown his work to be instances of paradigmatic formations of Englishness and middle-class values.¹⁰ In the following chapters, I will discuss the various ways in which *Bleak House* demands an interpretation beyond a formalistic approach.

My first chapter is concerned with *Bleak House*, and how the circumstances of 1851 inform the novel. In May of 1851, The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations opened with spectacular success with tens of thousands of people clambering to see the fantastic and exotic displays in Crystal Palace. The event was repeatedly mentioned and reviewed in multiple newspapers and magazines, including Dickens's own publications. The event spurred such enthusiasm from London's residents and sparked such a huge influx of people that it is remarkable that it received such little attention from Dickens in his public writings.¹¹ Dickens considered it a "horrible nuisance" and remarked that London fell "into a pleasant dulness since the closing of the Great Exhibition—an event for which [he was] fervently thankful."¹²

If Dickens despised the event and created a novel illuminating the ills of England, then why would he not mention the Exhibition? Seeking to create a more complete explanation not only of Dickens's disquiet with the Exhibition, but also of *Bleak House* as a riposte to its proclaimed progress, I situate my argument within the following scholars'. John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson were some of the first Victorian scholars to note the conspicuous absence of the Exhibition in *Bleak House*, but their treatment of it is sparse and incomplete. They mainly focus

on Dickens's active communal involvements, but the lack of reference to the Exhibition only points to their argument of topicality in his novel.¹³ In his selective study of the texts of Mayhew, Dickens, and Dostoevsky in relationship to Crystal Palace, Philip Landon believes that *Bleak House* intends to be an "instructive panorama."¹⁴ Noting Dickens's disdain for the event, he interprets the novel as a competitive guise that seeks to "show an even broader picture" than the Exhibition.¹⁵ However, Landon finds similarities between the commercial discourse that Crystal Palace proposed and the advertisements of *Bleak House*. Extending Landon's argument, Robert Tracy also finds similarities between the style of narration and the manner in which Crystal Palace's objects were catalogued. Tracy argues that the novel's form creates a space in which the failures of the Exhibition may be examined.¹⁶ My first chapter builds upon their arguments concerning the extensive scope of Dickens's anathema of England, but I focus on the specifics of his anxieties with the event and the narratives of the novel as a response to the events of 1851. The indulgent inclination towards an affirmation of England's aggrandized success is challenged in *Bleak House*. Crystal Palace stood as a shining, colossal reminder of England's boasted state of being, so Dickens retaliates against the Exhibition's overestimated success with disparate characters, genres, plots, and places. In *Bleak House*, Dickens creates his own exhibition, a display of London's ills. The favorable sentiment alleged by Chancery's judges in the preface is undercut by extreme despair presented in the novel. I maintain that the crux of Dickens's indictment of the Exhibition lies in the class disparity that the event seeks to mask. The lack of working-class representation (it is about "industry" after all) and the anxiety over the shilling days (days of reduced entrance price) are just a few examples of class prejudice. Dickens perceives England in less fragmented terms, insisting on an expansion in the range of the duties of London's citizens. He takes great pains to create a story that begins discordant, but consummates with a doctrine of unification.

Dickens challenges the disorganization of Crystal Palace by constructing his novel as an exposition, complete with various exhibits organized according to genre. *Bleak House* supplants the Exhibition by arranging the generic conventions in a fashion that informs and instructs readers. My second chapter focuses on the structure of genres within *Bleak House*, and how the

genres organize the novel. The framework of the novel mimics the organization of an exposition; *Bleak House* produces a variety of models or collections of concerns. While there has been some scholarship which addresses the variety of genres in the novel, I have found none that attempt any sort of connection between them. In her study of Dickens's career, Lyn Pykett finds *Bleak House* to be "a 'Condition-of-England' novel," because it is interested in anatomizing the "signs of the times".¹⁷ She notes that there are other genres present in the novel, but she focuses on *Bleak House* as a Condition-of-England novel. *Bleak House* is a comprehensive novel in terms of topics, issues, plots, and characters. In fact, J. Hillis Miller sees *Bleak House* as a text to be interpreted in the same manner as the documents in the novel.¹⁸ Just as the disparate characters in *Bleak House* encourage a study of their connections, so does a multiplot novel provoke an examination of the relationships between the baggy plots. In his study on dialogical form, Peter K. Garrett claims that the "primary function of [a] multiple narrative is clearly inclusiveness."¹⁹ To understand the multiplot form, it is necessary to discover "patterns of concentric circles with a single, thematic center."²⁰ Identifying three dominant genres, I focus on the Gothic novel, the Detective novel, and the Romance novel found in *Bleak House* and their connection. Esther occupies the novel as the thematic center, and her story often leads the plot. The progression of my essay is congruent with the development of the genres within the novel: the novel begins with a Gothic scene, slowly advances into a Detective novel, and ends with Esther's romance.

In the following scholarly studies of the conventions of the Gothic genre, *Bleak House* stands as a domesticated version of traditional Gothic, emphasizing the terror that resonates in the familiar. Peter J. Kitson claims that Dickens exploits "Victorian middle-class fears of the social and political forces that constrained and threatened their lives," and Peter K. Garrett identifies the Gothic as concerned with norms and limits.²¹ Garrett sees the Gothic as reflections of Victorian concerns of "the relation of self and society."²² How does *Bleak House* participate in the construction of the reader in relationship to society? In his Foucauldian reading of *Bleak House*, D.A. Miller describes how the novel unconsciously participates in the disciplinary practices outlined in *Discipline and Punish*:

The topic of the carceral in Dickens—better, the carceral as topic—thus worked to secure the effect of difference between, on the one hand, a confined, institutional space in which power is violently exercised on collectivized subjects, and on the other, a space of “liberal society,” generally determined as a free, private, and individual domain and practically specified as the family.²³

I extend Miller’s argument to explain the relationship between the Gothic tropes and the discourse of discipline by focusing on the pursuit of visibility in *Bleak House*. I address the disciplinary power found in the Gothic sections of *Bleak House* by explaining how the novel’s form reinforces the distinction that Dickens makes between the safe, consistent home and the dangerous, unstable outside (where prison awaits). The Gothic is Dickens’s exhibit of the novel’s menacing characters and places. Miller mainly focuses on Bucket and the genre of the Detective novel, so I extend his argument to address the varying genres of Dickens’s novel, beginning with the Gothic conventions of *Bleak House*.

After Dickens employs the Gothic to horrify the reader at the state of London, he uses Inspector Bucket to advance into the mode of the Detective novel. The detective plot becomes Dickens’s exhibit of how to apply acumen and order. Most scholars who discuss the rise of the Detective novel find its development in the very same moment as the inauguration of the Metropolitan Police force, particularly its detective force. The Detective novel often seems to mimic a detective, which is why James Walton finds *Bleak House* as sympathetic to the detective in order “to implement a comprehensive and intricate social satire.”²⁴ Lillian Nayder also identifies one of the purposes of the Detective novel is to “investigate a number of broader social issues: the origins and construction of social identity, for example.”²⁵ Ronald R. Thomas also finds that the Detective genre participates in the self-fashioning of the Victorian subject, but he believes that it coincides with criminology and forensic science developments.²⁶ In Peter Thoms’s analysis of detection in *Bleak House*, he interprets the various detectives in the novel as concerned with means of representation.²⁷ Focusing on the notion of following a track of blood, Thoms explores the various ways in which *Bleak House* provides a multiplicity of modes of self-expression, such as handwriting. While drawing from these arguments, I focus on how the generic conventions of

the Detective novel equip *Bleak House* with characteristics that emphasize order and logic, and how those characteristics exemplify discipline. Inspector Bucket and the amateur detectives in the novel embody an increasingly regulated society, and they illustrate a drive towards vigilance and acumen.

There is much less scholarship concerned with the romance within *Bleak House*. Romance tends to be a vague term due to its multifarious definitions, but Northrop Frye finds it to be a genre dedicated to wish-fulfillment, in which models of romance are presented.²⁸ In their introduction to the relationship between Romance and history, Susan Strehle and Mary Panizza Carden claim that the Romance novel functions as a cultural primer: “Love stories . . . [instruct] their primarily female readership how to behave, what to fantasize and wish for, and how to interpret the shapes their lives assume.”²⁹ In her study of Victorian representations of women, Deborah Epstein Nord focuses on the comparison between Esther and Lady Dedlock as the woman of the hearth and the woman of the streets. Seeing Lady Dedlock’s transgressions as an infection, Nord discusses how Esther deals with the taint of her heritage. Laurie Langbauer finds Lady Dedlock’s and Esther’s representations of Romance unsettling to the novelistic canon: “Romance slips over from a question of content to one of structure.”³⁰ Langbauer makes a distinction between the atmosphere of the hearth within the home and the wilderness of the outside, because she argues that Dickens “insists on the connection between home and romance in order to counteract and suppress the romantic restlessness—and the dangerous volition it suggests—within his writing.”³¹ My reading of the Romance found within *Bleak House* analyzes how the novel assists in disciplinary discourse, by focusing on how the Romantic conventions reinforce societal norms. I examine how norms are reinforced in the Romance novel through gender and marriage plots. By reviewing the various types of marriage plots within *Bleak House*, I argue that Esther’s marriage to Woodcourt proves most successful, because it sustains Victorian ideology and bolsters discipline.

Bleak House is Dickens’s constructed space in which the reader can examine the failures of responsibility, and the objects in these exhibits exemplify London’s failures. Just as the spectacles in Crystal Palace were fabricated with objects, so is Dickens’s tableaux fashioned with

objects. What is the purpose of the objects in Dickens's demonstrations? In my third chapter, I discuss how objects and characters interact in *Bleak House*. Dorothy Van Ghent was one of the first Victorian scholars to notice the aggressive character of Dickens's inanimate objects: "The course of things demonically possessed is to imitate the human, while the course of human possession is to imitate the inhuman . . . The animation of inanimate objects suggests both the quaint gaiety of a forbidden life and an aggressiveness that has got out of control."³² Van Ghent claims this is Dickens's technique for creating an unnatural environment to embellish his satire. Murray Roston disputes interpreting Dickens's novels as intimidating and proffers a less oppressive reading in which the plethora of things in the novel signals "a confident glow of achievement rather than a sense of menace."³³ Discussing the objects as commodities, Roston joins other scholars, such as Elaine Freedgood, in providing a Marxian explanation for the "commodity's invasiveness" in Dickens's novels.³⁴ Instead of focusing on whether Dickens's objects are reflections of commodity's reception, I focus on their symbolism. Eiichi Hara discusses the novel's saturation with symbols by interpreting them as symbols of satire.³⁵ Since Dickens often "confuses the categories of persons and things," I propose an association between objects and humanity.³⁶ Exploring the likeness of characters not only to their homes but also to their things, I question the purpose of their relationships.

In the following pages, I aim to make sense of Dickens's overtly satirical objective in the novel. Dickens's exhibit supersedes the fraudulent representations in Crystal Place; his novel provides a space in which to examine his collections of ills. *Bleak House* is filled with seemingly disparate characters, genres, plots, and places, but I seek to find their connections and the reason for those relationships. Esther is often at the crux of these connections; is she Dickens's answer to the Condition-of-England problem?

CHAPTER ONE

I can't bear the noise, and crowd, of London---where everybody is madder than usual due to the Exhibition...there is nothing---nothing at all---except the Exhibition.

- Charles Dickens¹

With over six million visitors, the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations of 1851 held in Hyde Park, London was *the event* of the year. In a letter to George William Curtis, Dickens teases his friend on his neglect of the Exhibition: "As you do not say that you are coming to see the great exhibition I conclude that you intend to be *the* man, memorable through future ages, who didn't see it."² Dickens attended twice despite his misgivings concerning the Exhibition (due to his brief involvement). A month after its closing, Dickens began to work on his next serialized novel *Bleak House*, yet there is no explicit mention of the highly publicized celebration in his novel. Why would an author known for the topicality in his novels seemingly neglect such a renowned happening? As Dickens scholar John Butt notes, "[O]ut of all that was happening in 1851, the Great Exhibition was the only important event which is not directly reflected in the novel."³ Dickens's personal writings, his short-lived involvement in the Exhibition, and the articles in the journal he edited help explain this conspicuous absence. Instead of fostering the embellished optimism provoked by the Exhibition, Dickens chooses to focus *Bleak House* on every contention that he had with the Great Exhibition, such as the absurdly exaggerated nationalism, the neglect of the working class, and the disorganized legal system. Dickens perceives Crystal Palace as a pretense of England's progress, so his objective for *Bleak House* is to lay bare England's deficiencies. Chancery, Krook's shop, the Jellybys, and the Pardiggles illustrate problems with misguided philanthropy, domesticity, and clutter. *Bleak House* is Dickens's riposte to the Great Exhibition's symbol of "progress" (Crystal Palace), in which Bleak

House exemplifies progress through effective communal contribution, proper subscription to gender roles, and as a place of production.

Dickens initial involvement with the Great Exhibition is the reason for the event's conspicuous absence from *Bleak House*. During the planning for the Great Exhibition, Dickens became involved in the Central Committee for the Working Classes (CWCC), which was a committee created to aid the working class's inclusion in the event. The CWCC would be responsible for coordinating transportation and housing for the working class's visits to the Exhibition. Because the CWCC also rallied for shilling days so that the lower classes could afford entrance, Dickens voiced his disapproval to Henry Cole concerning the delay to include shilling days until weeks after the opening.⁴ Initially, Dickens voiced his pride in his involvement with the committee in a letter to Samuel Wilberforce, the Bishop of Oxford: "I shall be very happy to become a member of the Committee to which that letter refers, and to do all in my power to advance its objects."⁵ However, his pride turned to resentment soon after the Royal Commission denied official recognition of the CWCC, and a frustrated Dickens suggested dissolving the committee, because without official recognition they "would be unable either to render efficiently the services it sought to perform or to command the confidence of the working classes."⁶ Without the CWCC, there would be no formal council to ensure that the working class was properly included in the event. The Exhibition was supposed to highlight industry, but those responsible for the success of London's industry were overlooked. Crystal Palace was full of machines with no one to explain how to operate them, and the working conditions of the human by-products of London's industry were masked by the glamorized commodities displayed throughout the Exhibition. Dejected by the Exhibition's blatant dismissal of the significance of the working class inclusion, Dickens creates a novel where class connection is made central and vital to the plot trajectory. In *Bleak House*, Dickens emphasizes that which the Exhibition sought to understate: the "true" condition of London in 1851. Dickens fills *Bleak House* with un-romanticized and back-breaking labor, decaying slum neighborhoods, and forlorn workers; because he fervently deemed these conditions in dire need of reform before the conditions worsened and spread.

Chancery represents the institutionalized clutter that is afflicting England, so *Bleak House* begins with an opening scene that evokes the chaos, accumulation, stagnation, and disease that Chancery fosters:

LONDON. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephantine lizard. . . Foot passengers, jostling one another's umbrellas, in a general infection of ill-temper, and losing their foot-hold at street corners, where tens of thousands of other foot passengers have been slipping and sliding since the day broke (if the day ever broke), adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud, sticking at those points tenaciously to the pavement, and accumulating at compound interest.⁷

This scene creates an image of overcrowded streets in which people are tumbling over each other, which is analogous to the state of London during the Great Exhibition. In *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display*, Jeffrey A. Auerbach estimates that over 25,000 people mobbed Crystal Palace on opening day; and in his study on Crystal Palace, Patrick Beaver discusses the problems that visitors were having finding accommodations and London's traffic problem due to the event.⁸ The hordes of people in London in 1851 due to the Great Exhibition hindered the sanitation reform that Dickens fervently advocated. At a banquet of the Metropolitan Sanitary Association on May 10, 1851, Dickens discusses the importance of sanitation reform:

That no one can estimate the amount of mischief which is grown in dirt; that no one can say, here it stops, or there it stops, either in its physical or its moral results. . . Searching Sanitary Reform must precede all other social remedies [cheers], and that even Education and Religion can do nothing where they are most needed, until the way is paved for their ministrations by Cleanliness and Decency.⁹

A month later, an article in the *Times* reported on other threats to sanitation:

[I]n English towns generally half the attainable period of life is lost to all who are born; that this loss of life is in no degree attributable to the situation, soil or climate of a locality, or to the denseness of population, or to the employments generally prevailing; and that the destroying agent is typhus fever generated by localized filth and excessive moisture. Bad drainage and immoderate dampness, --that is to say, too little water where it is needed, and too much where it is out of place, are the generating elements of typhus.¹⁰

The muddled imagery in the novel's opening scene is a combination of the two threats to health and sanitation: dirt (discussed in Dickens's speech) and water (deliberated in the *Times* article). The swarms of people described in the opening scene merely add to the muddy streets by "adding new deposits to the crust upon crust of mud" and thus worsen the sanitary conditions of London.¹¹

In *Bleak House*, Dickens chooses fog as his symbol for not only Chancery's far-reaching influence, but also its effects on the characters' perceptions concerning the condition of London. For a short time, Dickens studied law and even acquired a job as a court reporter, but it was his futile attempt to prevent an unauthorized edition of his book that made the court system the source of his vexation.¹² Because of Dickens' jaded firsthand knowledge of the legal system, he makes the Lord High Chancellor centripetal to the muddle in London: "[A]t the very heart of the fog, sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery."¹³ The Lord High Chancellor's turbid judgment is spread through the fog, clouding everybody else's judgments. The fog is omnipresent in *Bleak House* and affects every character. For example, Rick is misled to believe that the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case is not lost or Miss Flite mistakenly believes that her day will come in court. The fog does more than obscure the Londoners' perception concerning the legal systems efficacy, it also disguises Chancery's gross misconduct of the law and its antiquated operations. Instead of being the generator of positive change, Chancery is portrayed as a carnivorous and archaic monster. The Megalosaurus waddling down London's street invokes an image that is both anachronistic as well as menacing.¹⁴ Chancery is a dinosaur; in all the years that it has been in place, Chancery has never advanced or progressed. It is still the same archaic

system that has been in place for decades. In fact, Chancery has become such a convoluted system that it has mutated into a monster that consumes everything in proximity, such as Rick and Gridley. Dickens perceives Chancery as cultivating disorganization and harmful to society's advancement to the extent that *Bleak House's* opening pages warn the reader of Chancery's inefficiency: "Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here!," which is an echo of Dickens's personal warning in a previous written letter: "[I]t is better to suffer a great wrong than to have recourse to the much greater wrong of the law."¹⁵

Like the fog used in *Bleak House* to illustrate the veiled errors of Chancery's antiquated procedures, Dickens felt that the nationalistic temper engendered by the Great Exhibition clouded the public's judgment concerning the condition-of-England. In a letter to a friend, he bemoans the Exhibition's intrusion into every aspect of London life: "I can't bear the noise, and crowd, of London---where everybody is madder than usual due to the Exhibition...there is nothing---nothing at all---except the Exhibition."¹⁶ Tired of the constant references to the Exhibition, Dickens insists in his letter to W.H. Wills that he make adjustments to one of his articles for the journal *Household Words*: "[For] the Lord's love don't let us have any allusion to the Great Exhibition."¹⁷ In another letter, Dickens claims that "when anybody says 'have you seen---?' I say 'Yes,' because if I don't, I know he'll explain it---and I can't bear that."¹⁸ The Exhibition surrounded Dickens and seemed to infuse itself into everything, which is why Dickens seems to reject any attempt to call overt attention to the Exhibition (because then he would be giving recognition to the very event that he wanted erased from the Londoners' minds). For Dickens believed that the Great Exhibition distracted London from its own problems, a point that he makes very clear in his article "The Last Words of the Old Year" from *Household Words*:

I have seen...a project carried into execution for a great assemblage of the peaceful glories of the world. I have seen a wonderful structure, reared in glass, by the energy and skill of a great natural genius, self-improved: worthy descendant of my Saxon ancestors: worthy type of industry and ingenuity triumphant! Which of my children shall behold the Princes, Prelates, Nobles, Merchants of England, equally united, for another Exhibition---for a great display

of England's sins and negligences, to be, by steady contemplation of all eyes,
and steady union of all hearts and hands, set right?¹⁹

Instead of regarding the Exhibition's Crystal Palace as symbol of progress and community (foreign and domestic), Crystal Palace was a distraction: a huge, shiny spectacle that not only excited Londoners but also distracted from the local obligations. Meanwhile, Dickens uses his journal *Household Words* for the purpose of "raising up of those that are down, and the general improvement of our social condition," which is why Dickens employs characters such as Esther and Woodcourt who try to help their neighbors and improve social conditions.²⁰ The Exhibition diverted attention away from the "social condition" that desperately needed remedying, so Dickens makes clear that London's state is in dire need of reform.

One goal of the Great Exhibition was to "promote social and international harmony" which would "advance the improvement of the human race."²¹ However, the non-British half of the Exhibition was a mangled version of England's wing, the Exhibition did nothing to alleviate the horrible conditions of the working class or produce unity or empathy between the classes, and the Exhibition was merely a phantasmagoria of various objects. The showcased articles in Crystal Palace were not supplemented with price tags, which restricts the items' accessibility by producing an atmosphere of narrow availability. Additionally, the inexhaustible amount of articles displayed were overwhelming, especially to Dickens who visited the Exhibition: "I find I am "used-up" by the Exhibition I don't say there is nothing in it—there is too much. I have only been twice; so many things bewildered me. I have a natural horror of sights, and the fusion of many sights in one has not decreased it. I am not sure that I have seen anything but the fountain and perhaps the Amazon."²² Likewise, the contents of Krook's shop are off-limits and the massive amounts of items overwhelm the reader. Krook's shop becomes a miniature Crystal Palace, where a distressing amount of items are held but none are sold.

Even though Krook's shop serves as a retort to Crystal Palace's illusionary success of London's achievements, Dickens seeks to critique the much more consequential issue: the impotence of those in power. Krook's shop functions as an analog that foreshadows Chancery's impending fate. Chancery is rendered futile by the endless amounts of clutter that cause it to

become “backed up”: “[T]he silk gowns, with bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, masters’ reports, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them.”²³ Suitors will never receive a resolution to their cases, because the system is too

convoluted, just as the Jarndyce and Jarndyce will continue with little hope of resolution:

“Innumerable children have been born into the cause; innumerable young people have married into it; innumerable old people have died out of it . . . [until it] has passed into a joke.”²⁴ Krook’s Shop is affiliated with Chancery, because they are both are examples of immobility, a lack of progress, and accumulation. Similar to Chancery’s piling papers, Krook never dispenses of the contents of his shop, allowing them to pile up and earning him the name of “Chancery”:

You see I have so many things here...of so many kinds...wasting away and going to rack and ruin, that that’s why they have given me and my place a christening. And I have so many old parchmentses and papers in my stock. And I have a liking for rust and must and cobwebs. And all’s fish that comes to my net. And I can’t bear to part with anything I once lay hold of...or to alter anything, or to have any sweeping, nor scouring, nor cleaning, nor repairing going on about me. That’s the way I’ve got the ill name of Chancery.²⁵

Krook keeps accumulating trinkets and knick-knacks in his shop until he literally combusts from excess. Chancery and Krook’s Shop will fail, because they represent stunted systems: Krook’s shop does not represent a business but a junk pile, and Chancery does not represent a place of justice but a place of inequity. If Krook (Chancery’s “brother”) had allowed dispersal of any of his contents, the Jarndyce will could have been discovered and the estate might not have been consumed in costs. However, Dickens is more sympathetic to Krook, because he comprises the lower/working class and has no education that would teach him differently, while Chancery consists of the upper class, those with the education, knowledge, and power to change London but who have become too lazy and convoluted to be of any use.

Through Chancery’s connection to Tom-all-Alone’s, Dickens warns his readers not to overstate London’s progress by showing how a dereliction of duty can lead to fatality. Despite Hyde Park’s huge shiny spectacle filled with enticing, elaborate displays of goods, Dickens wants

his readers to remember that the streets are still filled with disease and misery. The mud, decay, and infection that pervade Chancery in *Bleak House* are more than analogues or associations to Tom-all-Alone's, because Chancery's ills are antecedents for deterioration of the slums.

Chancery is so unproductive and inefficient that its effects will trickle all the way down to impact Tom-all-Alone's. Instead of democratizing justice, the law has become beyond reach for those without the means to sustain lengthy trials. In effect, Chancery's neglect of justice for the working class will cause deterioration and disease in Tom-all-Alone's. The same stagnation that Dickens uses to define Chancery as a cesspool is echoed in the description of the main street of Tom-all-Alone's located "on the banks of the stagnant channel of mud."²⁶ As mentioned before, Dickens uses mud to exemplify the mixture of two elements that cause and spread disease: dirt and water. Tom-all-Alone's has grown out of the negligence and failures of Chancery, which is why it is named after a victim of Chancery's disservice, Tom Jarndyce. Tom Jarndyce was a suitor in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case and committed suicide after becoming entangled in the mess, but not before he wreaks havoc on Bleak House:

He gave it its present name, and lived here shut up: day and night poring over the wicked heaps of papers in the suit, and hoping against hope to disentangle it . . . In the meantime, the place became dilapidated, the wind whistled through the cracked walls, the rain fell through the broken roof, the weeds choked the passage to the rotting door.²⁷

The same rotting and decay can be found in Tom-all-Alone's with the tumbling tenements and ruined shelters, even the name reminds the reader of Chancery's effects on its plaintiffs.

In *Bleak House*, Dickens gives brutal examples of the slums and its habitants to make transparent its critical condition – something that the Exhibition strived to avoid. The Great Exhibition was to be an example of the "works of industry," but the machine operators are omitted, the process appears sanitized, and the poverty and suffering of the working class (those who made those works of industry possible) are absent or invisible.²⁸ So Dickens will make their existence pronounced and their condition egregious by using Jo as an example of a homegrown

savage and Tom-all-Alone's as a symbol for social disease.²⁹ The description of Tom-all-Alone is grueling in detail:

Jo lives---that is to say, Jo has not yet died--- in a ruinous place, known to the like of him by the name of Tom-all-Alone's. It is a black, dilapidated street, avoided by all decent people. . . these tumbling tenements contain, by night, a swarm of misery. As, on the ruined human wretch, vermin parasites appear, so, these ruined shelters have bred a crowd of foul existence that crawls in and out of gaps in walls and boards; and coils itself to sleep, in maggot numbers, where the rain drips in; and comes and goes, fetching and carrying fever, and sowing more evil in its every footprint.³⁰

Jo lives in a place where all *decent* people avoid or rather a place that all decent people neglect, yet it is Jo who the aristocratic Lady Dedlock and middle-class Mr. Bucket seek for help, making Jo play a pivotal role in the plot trajectory. Jo also serves as an example of the effects of London's neglect: "[Jo] is not a genuine foreign-grown savage; he is the ordinary home-made article. Dirty, ugly, disagreeable to all the senses . . . the growth of English soil and climate."³¹ Jo is the product of London's inadequate systems of care and the progeny of Tom-all-Alone's, the symbol for London's shortcomings. The disease and contagion that originate in Tom-all-Alone's will ascend class boundaries to circulate back to the perpetrators, those who caused the corruption through their neglect of the down-trodden areas of London and their implementation of institutions that further demarcate the classes:

There is not a drop of Tom's corrupted blood but propagates infection and contagion somewhere. It shall pollute, this very night . . . There is not an atom of Tom's slime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high. Verily, what with tainting, plundering, and spoiling, Tom has his revenge.³²

Dickens fervently believed that the condition of all Londoners are connected: “[We must not] neglect [our] wretched youth until they become criminals, and cost God only knows how much--- in money, waste, and ruin.”³³ The social ills that reside in Tom-all-Alone’s and that Jo personifies will reverberate throughout the classes, so that Dickens may illustrate the pressing need for reformation within London.

In *Bleak House*, Dickens uses two orphans, Jo and Charley, to illustrate the working class’s different capacities for usefulness in English society. As noted by Hugh Cunningham in his essay “Dickens as a Reformer,” Dickens was a known reformer and a well-known advocate for the working class. Due to his empathy for the less fortunate, orphans are a commonplace character in his novels, and they are designed to elicit sympathy from his readers for the plight of the poor.³⁴ In *Bleak House*, Jo is a specific character intended to illustrate the ramifications of shirking communal obligations. Jo is a home-grown savage, created from England’s negligence to the plight of the disadvantaged, and Dickens uses him as one example of the connection between the seemingly disparate classes (when his infection spreads).³⁵ Dickens employs Jo as a street sweeper, which is a job that requires perpetual effort and is nearly hopeless. Despite the streets’ inestimable amount of dirt, Jo continues to do his best to better the neighborhood. He is willing to help when needed (as summoned by Lady Dedlock and Inspector Bucket) and proves to be very useful. In *Bleak House*, Jo is made an indispensable character in solving the novel’s mysteries and his spreading infection illustrates class connection, a prominent theme in the novel: “What connexion can there have been between many people in the innumerable histories of this world, who, from opposite sides of great gulfs, have, nevertheless, been very curiously brought together!”³⁶ If Tom-all-Alone’s Jo had received the proper care, Charley and Esther’s infection could have been prevented.

While Jo is outside sweeping the streets, Charley’s industry is within the domestic realm as she performs gender appropriate labor. Dickens elicits sympathy for Charley by making her a character that makes the best of her situation. After her being orphaned, Charley works hard to take care of her younger siblings, and her hard work does not go unnoticed:

Some people won't employ her, because she was a follerer's child; some people that do employ her, cast it at her; some make a merit of having her to work for them, with that and all her drawback upon her: and perhaps pay her less and put upon her more. But she's patienter than others would be, and is clever too, and always willing, up to the full mark of her strength and over.³⁷

Dickens rewards Charley's industry by placing her in the service of Esther, where she learns housekeeping skills. The readers are supposed to be sympathetic to Jo because he is disadvantaged: he is orphaned, uneducated, and constantly brushed off and his residence in Tom-all-Alone's places him at great risk for disease. However, Charley is also orphaned and uneducated, but Esther's care and support help her to avoid death from Jo's infection and allow her to elevate her situation. Dickens treats Charley differently, because she illustrates a redeeming quality in the working class: they can be taught.

While Jo and Charley evoke pity from the readers, characters such as Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle educe condemnation for their misguided philanthropy – they become exhibits of what happens when the home (in a domestic or communal sense) is neglected. The Great Exhibition directed attention to London's progress in industry instead of London's need for reform. The Exhibition also compelled a preoccupation with the foreign with the multinational exhibits that incited an interest in other countries' goods and services. Serving as a contrast to Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle is Mr. Woodcourt, who is becomes an exemplary case of charitable contribution. After receiving a letter of complaint from Rev. H. Christopherson concerning his [mis]treatment of the Christian missions of Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle in *Bleak House*, Dickens replies by addressing the discrepancies between the massive amounts of energy spent on missions abroad and dereliction of conditions at home:

If you think the balance between the home mission and the foreign mission justly held in the present time---I do not. I abstain from drawing the strange comparison that might be drawn, between the sums even now expended on foreign missions, and the sums expended in endeavours to remove the darkest ignorance and degradation from our very doors, because I have some respect for mistakes that

may be founded in a sincere wish to do good. But, I present a general suggestion of the still-existing anomaly...in the hope of inducing some people to reflect on this matter, and to adjust the balance more correctly. I am decidedly of opinion that the two works, the home and the foreign, are *not* conducted with an equal hand; and that the home claim is by far the stronger and the more pressing of the two.³⁸

In *Household Words*, he includes Henry Morely's article "How Charity Begins at Home," where the state of the pauper children are lamented: "[The] misery of English pauper children, does not exist in any other Protestant community in the whole round of the world."³⁹ By making Jo's plight detestable and Charley's state unfortunate, Dickens makes Mrs. Jellyby's and Mrs. Pardiggle's missions look absurd and comical.

Dickens's novel focuses on household organization, because the house can be seen as a center to life or production. Control can be executed within the home, but what occurs outside of it cannot be completely controlled (as demonstrated by the chaotic crowds roused by the Exhibition). Dickens's preoccupation with clutter and disorder emanate from his personal frustrations with domestic projects as well as his antipathy for the Great Exhibition. During the inception of his novel, Dickens's letters describe his frustration with household affairs (he was moving into a new house), which he was trying to get ordered. In *Bleak House*, Dickens accentuates the harm in clutter and disorder because the accumulation represents an obstruction in circulation and it depicts a failure in responsibilities. To emphasize the necessity of organization, Dickens uses the Jellyby's house as an example of overwhelming clutter:

[W]onderful things came tumbling out of the closets when they were opened--- bits of mouldy pie, our bottles, Mrs. Jellyby's caps, letters, tea, forks, odd boots and shoes of children, firewood, wafers, saucepan-lids, damp sugar in odds and ends of paper bags, footstools, black-lead brushes, bread, Mrs. Jellyby's bonnets, books with butter sticking to the binding.⁴⁰

Even Esther laments on the reduced, meager attention given to Mrs. Jellyby's home: "It *must* be very good of Mrs. Jellyby to take such pains about a scheme for the benefit of Natives – and yet -

-- Peepy and the housekeeping!"⁴¹ When Esther and Caddy attempt to tidy the home, the task becomes too overwhelming for Mr. Jellyby, who is frightened into a state of helplessness: "[H]e came in regularly every evening, and sat without his coat, with his head against the wall; as though he would have helped us, if he had known how."⁴² The Jellyby house constitutes a failure of domestic femininity. The burden of domestic success lies on Mrs. Jellyby's shoulders because during the nineteenth century, the home was seen as the woman's "natural or appropriate place."⁴³ Furthermore, Mrs. Jellyby brings the Borrioboola Gha crusade home with her (she is constantly dictating letters from within her home), which makes her house even more public and open to criticism. Her house becomes an extension of her abilities to further her Borrioboola Gha project; the cause will never succeed because Mrs. Jellyby does not understand priorities or the organizational skills that are needed to further the project.

The Jellybys become Dickens's first poignant example of an inefficient household. Not only was the domestic space perceived as a haven from the uncontrollable outside world, but also the feminine domain was seen as a center of reproduction.⁴⁴ Reproduction having a double meaning: literal procreation and producing a new generation of capable housekeepers (which is accomplished through Esther's training of Caddy and Charley). If the home fails as a well-ordered space, then it will not reproduce anything meritorious. Mrs. Jellyby not only fails to successfully manage her household but also neglects to produce a worthy successor – Caddy. Dickens describes Caddy's perverted condition:

The room, which was strewn with papers and nearly filled by a great writing-table covered with similar litter, was, I must say, not only very untidy, but very dirty . . . But what principally struck us was a jaded, and unhealthy-looking, though by no means plain girl . . . And, from her tumble hair to her pretty feet, which were disfigured with frayed and broken satin slippers trodden down at heel, she really seemed to have no article of dress upon her, from a pin upwards, that was in its proper condition or its right place.⁴⁵

Mrs. Jellyby slights her domestic responsibility in favor of the African project of cultivating coffee and educating the natives of Borrioboola Gha, while her own Caddy wallows in the misery of her

lack of education. Thus, Mrs. Jellyby's household fails as a center of reproduction. Mrs. Jellyby is more interested in rousing support for her cause than she is for ensuring that the project's goals are accomplished. Her oversight for follow through is shown by her constant dictation of letters without evidence of progress in the coffee's cultivation or the native's education and by her dismissal of the Borriboola Gha cause by the end of the novel for a feminist one.

Dickens's second case of defective philanthropy is Mrs. Pardiggle, who misreads the needs of the unfortunate. Mrs. Pardiggle tries to distinguish herself from Mrs. Jellyby by claiming that, unlike her fellow philanthropist, she includes her family in her charitable ventures. Nevertheless, Dickens's readers are faced with the same sullen, malcontent children found in the Pardiggle family as those that were in the Jellyby family, thus making Mrs. Pardiggle the second example of slighted domestic obligations:

We had never seen such dissatisfied children. It was not merely that they were weazen and shrivelled—though they were certainly that too---but they looked absolutely ferocious with discontent. At the mention of the Tockahoopo Indians, I could really have supposed Egbert to be one of the most baleful members of that tribe, he gave me such a savage frown. The face of each child, as the amount of his contribution was mentioned, darkened in a peculiarly vindictive manner.⁴⁶

Even when Mrs. Pardiggle tries to fulfill her communal obligations, she is unsuccessful because she does not understand proletariat needs. Likewise, organizers of the Great Exhibition tried to keep the working class in mind with lowered entrance fees; but they misunderstood the working class's needs, because even if the fee was affordable, the working class would still be busy earning their bread. The brickmaker vehemently voices his exasperation with Mrs. Pardiggle's misinterpretation of their needs: "Have I read the little book wot you left. There an't nobody here as knows how to read it; and if there wos, it wouldn't be suitable to me."⁴⁷ When accompanying Mrs. Pardiggle, Esther expresses her doubts over her own qualifications for this visit:

At first I tried to excuse myself, for the present, on the general ground of having occupations to attend to, which I must not neglect. But as this was an ineffectual protest, I then said, more particularly, that I was not sure of my qualifications.

That I was inexperienced . . . That I had much to learn, myself, before I could teach others, and that I could not confide in my good intentions alone.⁴⁸

Not only does Esther understand that she has domestic responsibilities that have to be tended to, but she also realizes that her skills have to be better developed before she can teach others how to better conduct a household. Unlike Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle, Esther recognizes that in order for her to effectively serve her community she, first, has to successfully manage her household.

Esther and Mr. Woodcourt serve as divergent models of philanthropy from Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs. Jellyby; while Esther emphasizes the importance of not only satisfying housekeeping duties, but also refining skills before imparting knowledge, Mr. Woodcourt emphasizes communal responsibility before foreign benevolence. Dickens criticizes distant humanitarianism because the “work at home must be completed thoroughly, or there is no hope abroad.”⁴⁹ The Condition-of-England in 1851 was not as developed as the Exhibition portrayed, and the inclusion of other countries directed the Londoners’ attention outward. So Dickens insists on a local focus in his novel, where the successful characters are those that understand that reform must begin not only with communal responsibilities but also domestic duties. Unlike Mrs. Jellyby, Mr. Woodcourt colonial expeditions are not condemned because he returns to London “instead of yielding to colonial ambition”; furthermore, Mr. Woodcourt’s work “for the poor of Yorkshire will far outweigh any transient colonial fame and fortune.”⁵⁰ It is Mr. Woodcourt’s realization of his duties to his neighbors and the success of his charity that absolves him from critique, while Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle never redeem themselves in regards to their familial or communal obligations. However, Dickens’s hypercritical attitude towards the women subscribes to the conventional ideology of the Victorian age, where women’s biology positions them inside the home and housekeeping “informs her place” within the home.⁵¹ Since Mr. Woodcourt’s gender does not constrain him within the home, he is able to get his “hands dirty” by going to the colonies to help. The narrator discriminates between the two classes of charitable people: “one, the people who did a little and made a great deal of noise; the other, the people who did a great deal and made no noise at all.”⁵² Mr. Woodcourt is positioned as the latter type while Mrs. Pardiggle and Mrs.

Jellyby are used to exemplify instances of the former. Even though Mr. Woodcourt's hands-on approach (as opposed to Mrs. Jellyby's and Mrs. Pardiggle's telescopic philanthropy) distinguishes his philanthropy from other characters, it is his realization of communal obligations that makes him a commendable character.

Entropy reigns in Chancery, Krook's Shop, and the Jellybys, but in *Bleak House* Esther creates a milieu in which orderliness and neatness prevail – it is her housekeeping skills that make *Bleak House* productive. Dickens's novel subscribes to the nineteenth-century ideology of domesticity, where the woman was responsible for keeping the home a haven from the variable and inconstant outside world. Esther functions within this cult of domesticity by regulating and ordering *Bleak House*, but her proficiency will extend beyond the confines of *Bleak House*. In *Dickens and the Concept of Home*, Nancy Armstrong contends that *Bleak House* is different from Dickens's previous novels, because prior to *Bleak House* "the creation of a home is seen as an end in itself."⁵³ However, in *Bleak House* Dickens skirts the demarcation of outside/inside by connecting home and world.⁵⁴ The Great Exhibition connects the home and the world with exaggerated optimism, ignoring the reprehensible sanitary conditions in London, but Dickens's novel manifests "what is wrong with contemporary England."⁵⁵ Among England's problems are disease, which originates from the state of decay in Tom-All-Alone and makes its way into *Bleak House*, but Esther's prudence contains it (even if it claims her face). While Armstrong perceives housekeeping as a metaphor to stop the decay of England, the metaphor is more complex than just good housekeeping. England's local deficiencies have to be remedied before England can increase its influence on a more global scale (as it tries with a multinational exhibition). Dickens reinforces the idea of home before anything else with Esther: "[I]t is right to begin with the obligations of home, sir; and that, perhaps, while those are overlooked and neglected, no other duties can possibly be substituted for them."⁵⁶ Esther's understanding of the home's importance strives to make *Bleak House* a centre of strength and order, but her expertise is not stagnant – Esther mentors Caddy and Charley. Esther's competence in domestic management saves *Bleak House* from ruin, but it is her extension or reproduction of that knowledge that will repair

England's sins and negligences. While disease and decay circulate throughout the novel, it is Esther's adroitness for household management that will combat the entropy.

CHAPTER TWO

What do such large loose baggy monsters, with their queer elements of the accidental and the arbitrary, artistically mean?

- Henry James¹

Bleak House seems to be a loose baggy monster, overwrought with a superfluity of characters and a myriad of divergent and distracting subplots. Dickens's novel is multifarious, because he attempts a panoramic view of England's ills. Each setting, subplot, character, and narrator constructs a precise display of failure. Unlike *Crystal Palace* which distracts the public with an embellished display of achievements, *Bleak House* edifies its readers with an instructional arrangement of generic conventions. I argue that Dickens's plot digressions not only provide a comprehensive view of the magnitude of England's failures, but they also lead the reader to Esther, who provides various forms of organization. Esther is the nucleus of the three main genres (Gothic novel, Detective novel, and Sentimental Romance novel) used in *Bleak House* and provides coherence and regularity to the novel. *Bleak House* is an extensive critique of the plethora of ills in London, so Dickens creates a multi-generic novel to depict England on a much grander scale. Each genre functions to address a different concern: the Gothic novel's traditions point to the remnants of England's barbarianism; the Detective novel's conventions illustrate a need for an exhaustive examination of England's systems; and the sentimental Romance novel's form provides a model for improvement.

Multiplot Novel

Dickens's *Bleak House* is not only a multi-generic novel, but also a multiplot novel, designed to depict a panoramic view of societal shortcomings and to provide a suggestion for improvement. As an exhibit, Dickens's novel provides him the capacity to showcase specific

concerns with each plot. A common form of the multiplot novel that addresses societal failings is the social-problem novel. In 1843, Thomas Carlyle contemplates the Condition-of-England question in his book *Past and Present*, which examines the expansion of the slums, factory conditions, and the plight of the poor.² Similar publications would generate debates concerning how best to remedy England's social problems. Mary Poovey attributes the rise of social-problem novels to these debates as well as the rising awareness of these problems among the middle class.³ While *Bleak House* is not akin to other social-problem novels, such as *Mary Barton* with its brutal portrayal of the conditions of the poor or its more focused critique, it does contain vignettes that elaborate on how the "other" lives. The social-problem novel depends upon the juxtaposition of the living conditions of the poor and wealthy, because the contrast between these divergent lifestyles provides impetus for reform due to the substantial discrepancies in quality of life. *Bleak House* also provides insight into the world of the wealthy as well as the world of the poor, but Dickens's vignettes reveal more similitude than contrasts. The rottenness and the infection found in the slums of Tom-all-Alone's are analogous to the disease and the decay found in Chesney Wold; and the same dandyism found in the Dedlocks is mirrored in the elder Turveydrop. These parallels provide coherence to Dickens's motifs as well as extend the range of his criticism.

The multiplicity of *Bleak House* does not distract from Dickens's singular objective; instead, it creates a more expansive analysis as well as a sharper critique. It would seem that the multiple narratives in a multiplot novel would create a disconnection in design and a distraction to the readers by overwhelming them with digressions. In his study on the Victorian multiplot novel's dialogical form, Peter K. Garrett states that these newly emerging forms often contain "no clear or consistent principle of subordination, and even those novels which at first seem closest to the traditional model of main and subplot often turn out to subvert it as different plots advance or recede in importance."⁴ *Bleak House* does include multifarious plots that seem to disappear and appear arbitrarily, such as the brickmakers or the Pardiggles, but their episodes provide another facet to an argument, not a parenthesis.

In *Bleak House*, the tensions that Dickens creates augment his critique of England's failing institutions. Dickens generates these tensions through a double narration and varying

generic conventions. In addition to the feminine and sentimental first-person narrative of the novel's heroine, Esther, Dickens includes a more masculine and objective omniscient narrator. The novel begins with the anonymous narrator in Gothic mode, because the novel's objective is to anathematize England's ineffective institutions and demonstrate the scope of their injustice. The third-person narrator mainly wanders between Chancery, Chesney Wold, and Tom-all-Alone's, because the former two represent the larger institutions responsible for the critical state of Tom-all-Alone's. The anonymous narrator mostly uses Gothic form for these worlds to illustrate their connection as well as their grievous states. In addition to Gothic conventions, the anonymous narrator also includes a mystery and a detective plot. The Detective novel part of *Bleak House* is Dickens's means of demonstrating a need for a logical analysis of England's ills and their sources. Even though elements of both genres can be found within Esther's narration, the anonymous narrator uses these modes to counterbalance the more sentimental narration of Esther. Esther gives the reader a more tender, affectionate, and "moving" account as well as a more personalized one (opposed to the anonymous narrator who gives a more observational and detached commentary). The intimate narration of Esther brings the reader within the domestic sphere, contrasting the formal version of the anonymous narrator that provides a more public account. The disparity between the narrators' accounts gives the reader a more thorough picture of the Condition-of-England.

Gothic Novel

The eighteenth-century Gothic novel provides an examination of fears threatening a well-maintained society, such as the chaotic, the exotic, the uncivilized, the archaic, and the pagan. Gothic monsters terrorize the novels and exemplify those who threaten the norm. Gothic stories are staged in foreboding, ancient castles inhabited by monsters, often foreign, who threaten to penetrate, contaminate, or prey on the English. The rural Gothic settings symbolize the marginality of the monsters to British society, those who portray transgressive, excessive, and taboo desires. While the traditional Gothic can hardly be simplified into a few key characteristics, there are recurring themes, such as gloomy and dark atmospheres, labyrinthian castles, vampiric predators, madness, and imagery of decay and ruin. The exorbitant emphasis on people and

places that are rotten, excessive, or dangerous can be linked to Enlightenment ideals that sought reason, order, and visibility. Michel Foucault believes that the Gothic mode of emphasizing dark spaces, labyrinths, monsters, or madness is a result of the Enlightenment pursuit of visibility:

A fear haunted the latter half of the eighteenth century: the fear of darkened spaces, of the pall of gloom which prevents the full visibility of things, men and truths. It sought to break up the patches of darkness that blocked the light, eliminate the shadowy areas of society The new political and moral order could not be established until these places were eradicated.⁵

Thus, the Gothic novel provides a safe medium in which to explore those dangerous spaces.

The pursuit of visibility continues in the Victorian Gothic novel, but those places fraught with danger are no longer found on the fringes of society; instead, the menacing and ominous are found within London society. Crystal Palace implies clarity with its huge plates of glass; however, it proves to be a location of discontent by fostering recognition of class inequality. Nineteenth-century journals and newspapers constantly remarked how well behaved the working class attendants were; these attitudes reflect fears and concerns regarding class, which the Exhibition stimulated. Crystal Palace becomes one of those Gothic locations that prove to be other than what they appear. Multiple places in *Bleak House* mimic Crystal Palace's concealment, proving to be more ominous and encompassing the Victorian Gothic. During the Victorian period, the Gothic corpus expands and broadens to compensate for the rapidly changing society.⁶ The expansion of the middle class, due to industrialization, led to a domestication of the Gothic novel during the Nineteenth Century.⁷ Industrialization also created increasingly populated urban centers, which in turn became breeding spots for all sorts of crimes and horrors. Bourgeois homes and contemporary urban centers replaced ruined abbeys, haunted castles, and foreign rural settings. Instead of fear resonating from an alien source, writers frightened their readers with native monsters that lived in contemporary society. Lunatics, deviants, and criminals roamed the back alleyways of London's streets, threatening England's disciplined society, and the sanctity of the Victorian home. Dickens uses this inward turn of Gothic tropes in *Bleak House* to illustrate

London's dire conditions and the long-established failings of England. However, in *Bleak House*, the law is the deviant. Instead of policing the crimes, the law is committing them.

In *Bleak House*, Chancery is the most monstrous entity in London, because instead of exercising justice, it savors the aphotic atmosphere it creates. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault examines the rise of disciplinary techniques and the institutions that engage in them, such as schools and the military. Disciplinary techniques that seek to increase utility are contingent upon normalizing and hierarchical judgment and examination: "The examination combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment. It is a normalizing gaze, a surveillance that makes it possible to qualify, to classify and to punish."⁸ Foucault asserts that normalization is at the heart of a functional disciplined society, because it "compares, differentiates, hierarchizes, homogenizes, [and] excludes."⁹ Foucault does not include the judicial system as a normalizing entity, because the purpose of a judicial penalty is to differentiate between the permitted and the forbidden, not by homogenizing but by division.¹⁰ Amidst an increasingly disciplinary society, Chancery does not participate in normalizing techniques or even executing justice; instead, Chancery is the visible image of chaos, ruin, inefficiency, and archaism enacting destruction rather than order.

Dickens begins *Bleak House* with the Chancery, because it is the most monstrous, evil, and powerful entity in the novel. In his article on the Gothic, Robert D. Hume emphasizes the importance of atmosphere not only to arouse the reader's sentiments, but also to introduce the reader to an imaginary world removed from the familiar.¹¹ Therefore, Dickens begins his novel by creating a nightmarish atmosphere in his introduction of Chancery, in which fog creates a scene that is more macabre than supernatural: "[O]ne might imagine, for the death of the sun . . . Fog creeping . . . fog drooping . . . fog all around."¹² The monstrous fog, which is one of the Gothic embodiments of Chancery, murders the sun, and, therefore, obscures the visibility that a disciplinary society strives towards. The menacing fog hovers over London, representative of the dreary November weather, but also symbolic of the far-reaching effects of Chancery's evil. The fog is monstrosified to create a Gothic atmosphere in which the absence of sunlight creates an image of hell where the reader is menaced by the fog and trapped under it. The allusion between

Chancery and the underworld is further conveyed by Miss Flite's constant reference to her day in court as a "Day of Judgment."¹³ The fog generates more than a backdrop for pandemonium; the fog ravages the citizens: "Fog in the eyes and throats of ancient Greenwich pensioners . . . fog cruelly pinching the toes and fingers of his shivering little 'prentice boy on deck. Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all round them."¹⁴ Amidst this fog that terrorizes London is the Lord High Chancellor that sits at the heart of it and roams London with "a foggy glory round his head;" his High Court of Chancery is creating a frightening mess filled with "ten thousand stages of an endless cause, tripping one another up on slippery precedents, groping knee-deep in technicalities."¹⁵ Again, Chancery should be increasing visibility through prudent execution of the law, but, instead, the law is obscured and submerged in inefficiencies.

Dickens's Gothic representation of Chancery points to the archaic manner of power display outlined in *Discipline and Punish*. Foucault notes that "[a]t the end of the eighteenth century, torture was to be denounced as a survival of the barbarities of another age: the mark of a savagery that was denounced as 'Gothic'."¹⁶ Foucault associates those displays of power that are hinged upon a central, public demonstration of authority as "Gothic." In *Bleak House*, the law (represented as Chancery) is presented as the ultimate power source; but its power is problematic (in terms of a disciplinary society that depends on self-surveillance), because justice is only possible for the wealthy. The Dedlocks continue their dispute in the Jarndyce case, because they have the luxury of continuing a lengthy litigation: "Sir Leicester has no objection to an interminable Chancery suit. It is a slow, expensive, British, constitutional kind of thing."¹⁷ This atavistic manner of conducting justice exemplifies the disparateness in the law that will result in the form of vengeful hauntings.

The hauntings in *Bleak House* not only illustrate class connections, but also symbolize remnants of a Gothic or barbaric manner of justice. Hauntings provide a nexus of the past and the present; an instance where the gothic barbarities of the past punish the present. In *Bleak House*, Dickens uses the Dedlock estate as a Gothic trope of the haunted castle; it is set in a remote location and features Gothic hallmarks, such as turrets, stone monsters, moss and ivy, a family

mystery, graveyards, and a ghost.¹⁸ Dickens even includes the Gothic “other” with the murderous Frenchwoman responsible for the murder of the respectable English lawyer, Tulkinghorn. Her threat is readily apparent to Esther who immediately notices hostility in her: “I explained the impossibility of my engaging her . . . which seemed to bring visibly before me some woman from the streets of Paris in the reign of terror.”¹⁹ Unfortunately, the enshrouded ignorance that Chesney Wold foments clouds the judgments of its residents so much that they are unable to see its danger.

In *Bleak House*, the world of fashion is one of those shadowy areas of society that must be eradicated. Those in the fashionable world will not succeed, because their visibility is obscured: “[I]t is a world wrapped up in too much jeweler’s cotton and fine wool, and cannot hear the rushing of the larger worlds, and cannot see them as they circle round the sun.”²⁰ Their indifference impels retribution. The narrator describes Chesney Wold as a deadened world that has the “general smell and taste as of the ancient Dedlocks in their graves.”²¹ The estate is akin to a mausoleum due to the ubiquity of bygone Dedlocks within the estate: “On all the house there is a cold, blank smell . . . suggesting that the dead and buried Dedlocks walk there, in the long nights, and leave the flavor of their graves behind them.”²² The tomblike estate reeks of past sins and foreshadows the consequences of society’s indifference. The indifferent attitude of the aristocracy towards those outside their realm of reality, such as the slum’s residents, incites retaliation:

But [Tom will have] his revenge . . . There is not an atom of Tom’s lime, not a cubic inch of any pestilential gas in which he lives, not one obscenity or degradation about him, not an ignorance, not a wickedness, not a brutality of his committing, but shall work its retribution, through every order of society, up to the proudest of the proud, and to the highest of the high.²³

This excerpt foreshadows the fall of the proud (the Dedlocks) and the high (Lord High Chancellor); their negligence assures vengeance.

The ghosts that haunt the Dedlock estate are harbingers of revenge and symbols of an antiquated display of power. Lurking about the Dedlock’s estate is the vengeful spirit of Lady

Morbury of Ghost's Walk. Lady Morbury haunts the Dedlock's estate, because she was punished for her rebellion against the king and her husband. On her deathbed, she hatefully swears that she will plague the house until "the pride of this house is humbled."²⁴ Her threat foreshadows Sir Leicester's wounded pride at the news of Lady Dedlock's death and disgrace. The Gothic trope of a haunting continues with the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case, but it also represents a family curse and the impaired visibility that Chancery fosters. Throughout the novel, the Dedlock's conceit and vanity tenaciously cling to the Jarndyce dispute despite its obscurity: "This scarecrow of a suit has, in course of time, become so complicated that no man alive knows what it means. The parties to it understand it least."²⁵ Thus, the Jarndyce suit represents an antithesis to a pursuit of clarity.

During Richard's quest for a satisfactory career, John Jarndyce warns Richard against any involvement in the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit: "[F]or the love of God, don't found a hope or expectation on the family curse! Whatever you do on this side the grave, never give one lingering glance towards the horrible phantom that has haunted us so many years."²⁶ This curse signifies the shadowy area of society that Foucault warns against, because it distorts judgments. Like the fog that devastates London, the Jarndyce case (a metonym for Chancery's faulty dispersal of the law) clouds the litigants' sensibilities. In fact, the Jarndyce curse goes beyond a mere family phantom, because it afflicts those who are not even plaintiffs.

The disease, decay, and ruin that the Jarndyce curse inflicts in *Bleak House* links Tom-all-Alone's to Chancery and Chesney Wold.²⁷ The same mud coating London's streets, the same dirty weather obscures visibility, and the same stagnant pools of rain in Chesney Wold breeding disease can be found in Tom-all-Alone's. This filthy quarter of London seems to be named after Tom Jarndyce, a suitor in the interminable Chancery case:

This desirable property is in Chancery, of course. It would be an insult to the discernment of any man with half an eye, to tell him so. Whether "Tom" is the popular representative of the original plaintiff or defendant in Jarndyce and Jarndyce; or, whether Tom lived here when the suit had laid the street waste, all alone, until other settlers came to join him; or, whether the traditional title is a

comprehensive name for a retreat cut off from honest company and put out of the pale of hope.²⁸

Dickens implies a connection between the slums and Tom Jarndyce, but he also creates parallels between the destruction inflicted by Chancery and the devastation wreaked by Tom:

This is the Court of Chancery; which has its decaying houses and its blighted lands in every shire; which has its worn-out lunatic in every madhouse, and its dead in every churchyard; which has its ruined suitor, with his slipshod heels and threadbare dress, borrowing and begging through the round of every man's acquaintance . . . which so exhausts finances, patience, courage, hope; so overthrows the brain and breaks the heart.²⁹

Then, in a later passage, Dickens echoes the ruined houses of Chancery in his description of Bleak House:

[T]he place became dilapidated, the wind whistled through the cracked walls, the rain fell through the broken roof, the weeds choked the passage to the rotting door. When I brought what remained of him home here, the brains seemed to me to have been blown out of the house too; it was so shattered and ruined.³⁰

The same shattered windows and ruin found in Bleak House are repeated in Dickens's description of Tom-all-Alone's:

It is a street of perishing blind houses, with their eyesore stoned out; without a pane of glass, without so much as a window-frame, with the bare blank shutters tumbling from their hinges and falling asunder; the iron rails peeling away in flakes of rust; the chimneys sinking in; the stone steps to every door (and every door might be Death's Door) turning stagnant green.³¹

These connections between seemingly disparate worlds emphasize Chancery's extensive and vicious influence through the interminable Jarndyce and Jarndyce case.

The final manner in which Chancery embodies the Gothic canon is seen with its vampiric effects. Chancery survives not only by feasting upon its victims, but also by continuously luring them into its web of chaos. Miss Flite describes the manner in which Chancery drains the life out

of those entangled in it: "Draw peace out of them. Sense out of them. Good looks out of them. Good qualities out of them. I have felt them even drawing my rest away in the night. Cold and glittering devils!"³² Gridley also shows Chancery's depleting effects: "His voice had faded, with the old expression of his face, with his strength, with his anger, with his resistance to the wrongs that had at last subdued him. The faintest shadow of an object full of form and color."³³ Esther is startled at his diminished state: "[A]t first I recognised no likeness in his colorless face to what I recollected."³⁴ Chancery has drained Gridley of any signs of life and thus made him into another corpse to be put in one of the novel's diseased graveyards. Esther also witnesses Chancery's draining power in Richard: "So slow, eager, so bloodless and gaunt, I felt as if Richard were wasting away beneath the eyes of this adviser, and there were something of the Vampire in him."³⁵ Chancery is producing corpses that are useless to society.

Not only does Chancery draw the life out of its victims, but it also mesmerizes them so that they keep returning: "There's a cruel attraction in the place. You *can't* leave it. And you *must* expect."³⁶ Chancery's bewitching power can be seen in the mad little Miss Flite, who continuously returns to the court despite the lack of resolution in her case. Richard Carstone is another instance of seduction by the legal system, and Vholes is an incarnation and linguistic echo of Chancery's vampiric power. During Esther's visit to Richard and Ada, she observes in Vholes a lack of "human passion or emotion in his nature."³⁷ Esther perceives an inhuman element in the relationship between Vholes and Richard. Then, Esther witnesses Vholes's vampiric effects when she finds Richard thin, languid, wan, restless, and no longer youthful. The anonymous narrator also notes the manner in which Vholes feeds upon his clients: "Make man-eating unlawful, and you starve the Vholeses!"³⁸ Richard's desk, representative of his new occupation, is likened to a coffin: "This desk is your rock, sir! Mr. Vholes gives it a rap, and it sounds as hollow as a coffin."³⁹ Richard's fate is death by the vampiric system that he has become a part of, and symbolic of the manner in which Londoners are seduced by the very entity that is destroying them.

The Gothic presence in *Bleak House* is motivated by the failure of England's justice system to advance beyond its barbaric past, and its consequent inability to address the social injustices of class structure. Position within the class stratum continues to take precedent in

Chancery over equity and justice. By invoking hauntings, curses, and vampires, Dickens prompts his readers to beware of the monstrous effects of malfeasance.

Detective Novel

In *Bleak House*, the Gothic side of the narrative incites abhorrence at the state of London, but the Detective genre advocates order, judgment, and insight. Gothic narrative focuses on secrets, darkness, and things unknown. However, the Detective novel seeks to provide transparency and visibility to the darkened spaces formed in the Gothic parts of *Bleak House*. As A.E. Murch describes in his study of the genre, the Detective novel's suspense hinges upon the mystery surrounding a criminal activity, the frantic flight of the criminal, and the fierce pursuit by the detective – all of which are executed with the highest level of reason, order, and acumen.⁴⁰ In his article discussing the typology of detective fiction, Tzvetan Todorov notes that “[e]verything must be explained rationally” and the fantastic must not be admitted.⁴¹ The Detective genre is designed to encourage logical thought rather than dwell on a phantasmagorical plot or a love story. *Bleak House*'s Detective Bucket solves the novel's mysteries by executing logic and reason, but his methods are contingent upon his surveillance of society. Bucket and the Detective novel genre that he represents indicates the emerging cultural paradigm of the disciplinary society that Foucault discusses in *Discipline and Punish*.

Dickens's support for the new task force is evident in the novel's detective, Inspector Bucket. Bucket's prudent and vigilant yet discreet manner of detection and humble (and middle-class) background make him the optimal character to represent the improved police force. The predecessors of the detectives of the Metropolitan Police force were the Bow Street runners, who were synonymous with corruption and inefficiency. Part of the generic rise of the English Detective novel during the nineteenth century has been attributed to the organization of the Metropolitan Police force in 1829 and their incorporation of detectives in 1842.⁴² The new task force was met by contemporaries with caution, but soon accepted as a discrete and efficient profession. Dickens not only was friends with Inspector Field, who has been noted as the

inspiration for the character of Detective Bucket, but also published a series of articles on the Metropolitan Police. Dickens seemed to have a fanatical interest and fondness for the detectives:

[T]he Detective force organised since the establishment of the existing Police, is so well chosen and trained, proceeds so systematically and quietly, does its business in such a workmanlike manner and is always so calmly and steadily engaged in the service of the public that the public really do not know enough of it, to know a tithe of its usefulness.⁴³

Dickens's Detective Bucket encompasses this review with his stealthy manner of observation and dedication to the illumination of truth.

This branch of police professionals, represented by Bucket, embodies Foucault's notion of disciplinary practices during the nineteenth century through its unobtrusive manner and specialized technique. Bucket's sharp eyes are constantly yet silently take mental inventories of everything and everyone around him. It is Bucket's unassuming manner that makes him the ideal character to successfully ascertain the novel's mysteries: "He completes his observations as quietly and carefully as he has carried them on, leaves everything else precisely as he found it."⁴⁴ Foucault's notion of self-discipline is heavily influenced by Jeremy Bentham's model of the Panopticon, in which there is a constant "state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power." Akin to the Panopticon's watch guard, Bucket's character appears and reappears throughout the novel: "Time and place cannot bind Mr. Bucket." Even Jo remarks that "He's in all manner of places, all at wunst," and Mr. Snagsby is startled by Bucket's sudden, unexpected, and pervasive presence:

[A] person with a hat and stick in his hand who was not there when he himself came in, and has not since entered by the door or by either of the windows. There is a press in the room, but its hinges have not creaked, nor has a step been audible upon the floor. Yet this third person stands there, with his attentive face, and his hat and stick in his hands, and his hands behind him, a composed and quiet listener.⁴⁷

Bucket's seemingly spontaneous manner of appearance makes him the ideal model for a new division of police authority.

Bucket's constant state of surveillance of those around him often causes others not only to survey their neighbors but also to self-punish, when needed. The anonymous narrator describes the power of Mr. Bucket: "Mr. Bucket and his fat forefinger are much in consultation together . . . he shakes it before a guilty man, and it charms him to his destruction."⁴⁸ Lady Dedlock flees in shame from her early misdeeds; and still other characters, such as Nemo, punish themselves into a state of self-obliteration.⁴⁹ The atmosphere of surveillance prompts a plethora of amateur detectives; and while individually they might not succeed, they do aid in revealing truths and exposing secrets. For example, Guppy is the first to notice the similarity between Lady Dedlock and Esther, and Mrs. Bucket is integral in unveiling Hortense as Tulkinghorn's murderer. Bucket uses his observation skills to decipher the clues and sort through the mess of accusations to eventually weed out the culprits.

Among the hodgepodge of novices, Tulkinghorn is one prominent investigator that serves as Bucket's foil. Dickens juxtaposes Tulkinghorn and Bucket to manifest varying modes of power. Tulkinghorn is aligned with not only the aristocratic family of the Dedlocks but also the exploitative legal system. The lawyer's acquisitions do not edify but entrap his victims. Lady Dedlock describes Tulkinghorn's ubiquitous and pervasive manner: "Always at hand . . . No relief or security from him for a moment."⁵⁰ Tulkinghorn delights in his accumulation of secrets, and taunts Lady Dedlock with impending and certain doom:

"Do you contemplate undeceiving Sir Leicester to-night?"

"A home question!" says Mr. Tulkinghorn, with a light smile, and cautiously shaking his head at the shaded face.

"No, not to-night."

"To-morrow?"

"All things considered, I had better decline answering that question, Lady Dedlock."⁵¹

His delight in misery and misappropriation of power causes animus from his victims, and it results in his vengeful murder. Tulkinghorn's antipode, Bucket, executes justice and personifies the improved police force rather than the outdated, faulty, and inept that Tulkinghorn represents.

Dickens encourages comparison between Tulkinghorn and Bucket:

Contrast enough between Mr. Tulkinghorn shut up in his dark carriage, and Mr. Bucket shut up in *his*. Between the immeasurable track of space beyond the little would that has thrown the one into the fixed sleep which jolts so heavily over the stones of the streets, and the narrow track of blood which keeps the other in the watchful state expressed in every hair of his head!⁵²

Tulkinghorn is a silent repository of secrets, of which he has no intention of divulging: "He wants no clerks. He is a great reservoir of confidences, not to be so tapped."⁵³ Even his apartment is filled with locks where "no key is visible."⁵⁴ Contrastingly, Bucket will "softly [open] the door of communication between that room and the next, and [look] in."⁵⁵ Consistent with the intention of the detective genre Bucket exposes truth not hides them.

Bucket places an emphasis on training, and his manner of conduct exemplifies his commitment to order, discipline, and reason. In his essay on docile bodies, Foucault discusses the way in which a disciplined society creates a network of relations in which participants are classified according to the quality of their work.⁵⁶ There is constant emphasis on the way in which Bucket "notices things" and observes: "He is a sharp-eyed man—a quick keen man – and he takes in everybody's look at him, all at once, individually and collectively."⁵⁷ Bucket's experience and excellent execution of duties has earned him the rank of Detective. Rank is important because it is contingent upon skills and training.⁵⁸ When Bucket discusses the surviving child with the Brickmaker's family, he exclaims that the women need to "train him respectable."⁵⁹ There is emphasis on training the child, rather than raising the child. Foucault contends that training is imperative to discipline, because strict models "establish rhythms, impose particular occupations, [and] regulate the cycles of repetition."⁶⁰ In his pursuit of Lady Dedlock, Bucket stops by a police station to execute orders, where Esther witnesses officers's training in such a way that they operate like a flawless and efficient piece of machinery:

Two police officers, looking in their perfectly neat uniform . . . were quietly writing at a desk . . . A third man in uniform, whom Mr. Bucket called and to whom he whispered his instructions, went out; and then the two others advised together, while one second officer, who had (there were several in an outer room) who took it up and went away with it. All this was done with the greatest dispatch, and without the waste of a moment; yet nobody was at all hurried. As soon as the paper was sent out upon its travels, the two officers resumed their former quiet work of writing with neatness and care.⁶¹

Each officer has his own task, which he expertly and automatically executes – right down to the meticulous handwriting. Even Foucault notes that good handwriting indicates a disciplinary code rigorously engrained in the body, in which every action is executed in the best and most productive manner.⁶² The manner in which Bucket constantly conducts himself is indicative of his training, and he takes great pride in his profession.

Bucket does not take a prominent role in *Bleak House* until the latter part of the novel, but his character is indispensable. The inspector is introduced as a supplement to Tulkinghorn's investigation, but instead of aiding the lawyer's malicious endeavors, he investigates his demise. The shift in emphasis from Tulkinghorn to Bucket illustrates the transposition of power to a more invisible form. Like the visible displays of power embodied in public executions, Tulkinghorn embodies a more oppressive mode of power; while Bucket's inconspicuous manner of observation symbolizes the invisible form of disciplinary practice. The omnipresence of observant characters reinforces the need for insight, comprehension, and progress. Just as the improvement of the Metropolitan Police force signals the advancement of vigilance and order, so does Dickens encourage acuity and prudence with Inspector Bucket and the detective plot.

Romance Novel

As I have illustrated, *Bleak House* employs multiple generic conventions. Dickens uses Gothic modes to explore and identify those dark spaces within the novel, and the detective plot engages in surveillance and acumen to punish wrongdoings – but what about the romances in

the novel? The romance plots are another one of those loose baggy monsters in *Bleak House* that appears and disappears in the novel, mainly serving as a backdrop. I will argue that these concomitant plots not only provide a much needed sentimental side to the storyline but also provide a standard or a norm by which other characters might judge themselves.

In the preface to *Bleak House*, Dickens informs his readers that he has “purposely dwelt upon the romantic side of familiar things.”⁶³ To invoke the term “romantic” should prompt specific formulaic plot progressions that are embedded in universal prototypes, but this becomes problematic when the ambiguousness nature of the term is scrutinized. First, it is necessary to demarcate the term “romantic.”⁶⁴ Jean Radford notes, in her essay on romance, that the progression of the Romance genre is inconsistent and often vague: “[T]here is no historical relationship between Greek ‘romances’, medieval romances, Gothic bourgeois romances of the 1840s, late nineteenth-century women’s romances and mass-produced romance fiction now – except the generic term.”⁶⁵ Despite the varieties of romance, theorist Northrop Frye attests that they all subscribe to a wish-fulfillment component.⁶⁶ Thus the romantic side of *Bleak House* becomes a forum for Dickens’s to administer alternate outcomes and proffer a hopeful ending.

Dickens’s melodramatic technique provides the novel with important binaries, which provide valuable models of comparison. Foucault’s study on norms is helpful in understanding how Dickens’s melodrama provides samples and variations of romance. Foucault states that discipline is partly contingent upon the organization of subjects according to universal norms, and that subjects are distributed “along a scale, around a norm, [which] hierarchize individuals in relation to one another.”⁶⁷ In his study on melodramatic technique, John G. Cawelti emphasizes the importance of right and wrong or evil and good with the intention of reiterating the triumph of the appropriate. Dickens intensifies the goodness of Esther by contrasting her with Lady Dedlock and the anonymous narrator.

While the formulas may differ between the varying types of Romance, a few conventions endure, such as containing a love story, a polarization of characters, and a happy ending involving a marriage – each exemplifying the disciplinary power discussed by Foucault. While there are other love plots in the novel (Ada and Rick or Caddy and Prince), the novel mainly

concerns itself with Esther, the love story that reveals her lineage and her own love story which produces the next Bleak House. Dickens's centralization of Esther's story to the plot trajectory positions Esther as an important model in terms of Romance plots – especially as the details of her birth are revealed. Lady Dedlock fulfills the Victorian prototype of the Fallen Woman, whose sexual transgressions lead to her demise.⁶⁸ Despite the stains on her past, Esther is redeemed through her subscription to domestic ideology.⁶⁹ She remains a virginal exemplar of industry, sentiment, and self-sacrifice, which is rewarded with a marriage to Woodcourt and a Bleak House of her own. The dissimilitude between the demeanor of Esther and Lady Dedlock further illustrate their antithetical roles in the novel: Esther illustrates pureness and gentleness while Lady Dedlock is haughty, indifferent, and cold.

Unlike Esther, Lady Dedlock represents the wild, questionable woman who threatens the fabric of respectable society. Lady Dedlock is mostly described as bored, but there are glimpses where her guard is dropped and tumultuousness is hinted upon. For example, unable to constrain her passions during a conversation between Sir Leicester and Tulkinghorn regarding Nemo's handwriting, Lady Dedlock has to exit the carriage.⁷⁰ For Dickens, excessive female passions are akin to the wild, as he also demonstrates with Hortense's need to walk barefoot through the grass to cool her temper.⁷¹ As the Fallen Woman, Lady Dedlock has to flee from the comfort of the Dedlock estate to the die in the "wilderness," symbolic of the need for room for unbridled passion that cannot be contained within the Victorian home.

As the Fallen Woman, Lady Dedlock's placement within the decaying aristocratic society questions who is worthy of the term "respectable." In the novel's second chapter, the narrator informs the reader that Sir Leicester has married Lady Dedlock for love and gives other allusions to the classical medieval romances by conjuring up visions of "sleeping beauties" and "knights."⁷² The allusion between the Dedlock's marriage plot and a medieval mode of marriage signal an increasingly obsolete manner of marriage indicative of a society filled class conflict. Unlike Esther and Woodcourt's marriage which signifies a dedication to middle-class ideals, the Dedlock marriage reveals an unbalanced marriage, lacking trust and affection.⁷³ The love in their marriage is narrowly revealed until Lady Dedlock's death is revealed to Sir Leicester. The lack of intimacy

in their marriage is revealed by Sir Leicester's exclamation of forgiveness. Lady Dedlock's romance fails because she is intertwined with a failing, decrepit, and decaying world of aristocracy where nothing prospers but everything drowns. These antipodean characters exemplify the normal/abnormal divisions which contribute to the identification of norms discussed in Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*: "Generally speaking, all the authorities exercising individual control function according to a double mode; that of binary division and branding (mad/sane; dangerous/harmless; normal/abnormal)."⁷⁴ The goodness of Esther can only be fully grasped when she is compared to the other repugnant characters.

Another aspect of the novel which compels the reader to perceive of Esther's goodness and thus acknowledge her role as the norm within *Bleak House* is the double narration. The sentimental side of *Bleak House* is emphasized by Esther's narrative, which comprises half of the novel, and provides a counterbalance to the more cynical tone of the anonymous narrator. The descriptive third-person narrator engages in vivid and informative yet removed commentary:

Jo, and the other lower animals, get on in the unintelligible mess as they can. It is market-day. The blinded oxen, over-goaded, over-driven, never guided, run into wrong places and are beaten out; and plunge, red-eyed and foaming, at stone walls; often sorely hurt the innocent, and often sorely hurt themselves. Very like Jo and his order; very, very like!⁷⁵

The anonymous narrator describes Jo and his fellow Toms-all-Alone's inhabitants in a detached manner with little affect, indicative of the narrator's resignation and passivity.⁷⁶ While Esther's narrative is overtly demure, appreciative, and hopeful:

I was brought up, from my earliest remembrance--like some of the princesses in the fairy stories, only I was not charming-by my godmother. At least I only knew her as such. She was a good, good woman! . . . She was handsome; and if she had ever smiled, would have been (I used to think) like an angel-but she never smiled . . . She was so very good herself, I thought, that the badness of other people made her frown all her life . . . It made me very sorry to consider how

good she was, and how unworthy of her I was; and I used ardently to hope that I might have a better heart.⁷⁷

Despite her godmother's disagreeable demeanor, Esther determines that it must be merited and lets it inspire her to a greater ideal. The juxtaposition of these contrasting narratives reiterates the wholesomeness of Esther's character.

In addition to providing a softer, more sentimental voice to *Bleak House*, Esther's narrative provides a very intimate look into the domestic sphere. The domestic sphere was to be a haven, a safe place in which not only to retreat from the unstable outside world but also to deal with the problems of that unpredictable world.⁷⁸ In fact, the family played a crucial role in preparing its members for the outside world; the family functioned as a "bridge between the individual and society, the private and the public."⁷⁹ In her examination of domesticity, Rachel Ablow notes the increasingly sympathetic side of Dickens's novels as tied to the private sphere.⁸⁰ Dickens's characters are often highly idealized and the familial bonds were accentuated.⁸¹ During their visit to the Jellybys, Ada lauds Esther's domestic capabilities: "You are so thoughtful, Esther," she said, "and yet so cheerful! and you do so much, so unpretendingly! You would make a home out of even this house."⁸² The *Angel in the House* culminates in Esther, who cheerfully fosters an agreeable environment without the visible mechanisms of work. Esther housewifery is celebrated by her plethora of nicknames, such as Mother Hubbard, Little Old Woman, and Dame Durden.⁸³ Her household capabilities are instantly recognized by Caddy, who is exceedingly ashamed at the state of herself and her house. The presence of Esther as the norm inspired Caddy to improve herself: "I felt I was so awkward," she replied, "that I made up my mind to be improved."⁸⁴ Caddy looks to Esther for guidance: "[L]et us often have a chat about these matters, and try to find the right way through them."⁸⁵ In *Good Girls Make Good Wives*, Judith Rowbotham emphasizes the need for household skills, and how aptitude is rewarded with marriage.⁸⁶ In fact, when a Romance ends in a happy marriage, it reinforces the Victorian ideology for women to fulfill their societal roles, which is to cultivate a comfortable and tranquil refuge from the outside world for their husband. Her adolescence should be honing her skills for preparation for marriage, and, in the end, hopefully she is rewarded with a marriage.

Dickens concentrates on Esther as the novel's Angel of the House and her romance seems linked to duty. Esther is the tender and loving housekeeper of Bleak House who realizes that the concentrations of her duties lie within the home before communal commitments are made. Throughout the novel, Esther proves her worth as the sentimental stereotype of the ideal Victorian woman, which is why Dickens rewards her fulfillment of duties with a marriage to her secret love, Woodcourt, and a Bleak House of her own. Her achievement of subscription to Victorian ideals allows her to expand her realm of responsibility with a husband and house of her own. Woodcourt praises Esther for self-less devotion to others, which in turn earns her love: "You do not know what all around you see in Esther Summerson, how many hearts she touches and awakens, what sacred admiration and what love she wins."⁸⁷

Esther's romance is inextricably linked to her success as the Angel of the House so that Dickens can provide her romance as a favorable interlude from the chaos outside the home. In his chapter on docile bodies, Foucault emphasizes that "[d]iscipline is an art of rank, a technique for the transformation of arrangements. It individualizes bodies by a location that does not give them a fixed position, but distributes them and circulates them in a network of relations."⁸⁸ During her education and training at Greenleaf, she becomes adapted to the idea of routine and discipline: "Nothing could be more precise, exact, and orderly, than Greenleaf. There was a time for everything all around the dial of the clock, and everything was done at its appointed moment."⁸⁹ As she progresses, her position at Greenleaf changes: "I was not only instructed in everything that was taught at Greenleaf, but was very soon engaged in helping to instruct others. . . As I began to know more, I taught more."⁹⁰ Esther's position at Greenleaf and her transition to mistress of Bleak House illustrates her range of abilities being utilized. Esther begins and succeeds in Bleak House, then she illustrates her domestic abilities in other homes and instructs others. Her abilities are evident and acknowledged when she visits Neckett's children: Mrs. Blinder hands Esther the key without hesitation. This small action reinforces Esther's mastery of household duties. For Frye, the charm of romance is the dissolution of the delimitation of the real and the imaginary by "offering a vision of 'the possible or future or ideal'."⁹¹ Esther is that Victorian ideal, and Dickens uses her sentimental narration and her successful union with

Woodcourt to reinforce the necessity of duty and obligation. The romance within the novel addresses duty by providing readers with a paradigm of sentiment, nurture, and obligation with an emphasis on fostering a safe, stable home.

Esther provides a considerable amount of structure to the loose baggy monster that is *Bleak House*. With characters and plots that appear accidental or arbitrary, they are coalesced into her story. Additionally, her sentimental narration provides symmetry to the biting and grave anonymous narration. The juxtaposition of the contrasting narration furnishes the novel with distinctive perspectives emphasizing standards or norms. Foucault's study of regulatory processes proves useful for providing a vocabulary in which to understand emerging paradigmatic practices concerning discipline, control, and conduct. The amalgamation of genres in *Bleak House* dispenses varying forms of surveillance and discipline by exposing the residual elements of barbarianism (Gothic), scrutinizing the systematic failures of London as well as championing reason, order, and judgment (Detective), and encouraging a sympathetic standard to strive towards (Romantic).

CHAPTER THREE

“In all parts of the window, were quantities of dirty bottles: blacking bottles, medicine bottles, ginger-beer and soda-water bottles, pickle bottles, wine bottles, ink bottles.

- Charles Dickens¹

There is an overwhelming amount of “stuff” in every shop, office, and home in *Bleak House*. The novel becomes not only a catalogue of misdeeds, but also a comprehensive index of places, persons, and things. In the novel’s space, the objects construct, develop, and occupy Dickens’s exhibition of England. Often in *Bleak House*, Dickens submerges the reader in a pile of things. Chancery inundates London with meaningless confusion:

On such an afternoon, the various solicitors in the cause, some two or three of whom have inherited it from their fathers, who made a fortune by it, ought to be—as are they not?—ranged in a line, in a long matted well (but you might look in vain for Truth at the bottom of it), between the registrar’s red table and the silk gowns, with bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, masters’ reports, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them.²

Engulfed in tumultuous disorder, Londoners find themselves grasping for resolve. Miss Flite daily brings her “papers” to the courthouse for judgment, and Richard withers away in his search for the Jarndyce and Jarndyce will. Instead of providing a safe retreat from Chancery’s terror, Dickens ambushes his readers with an agglomeration of things, characters whose humanity is either resisted or denied them to the point of their identification with objects, and still others who

cling to objects because of their capacity to represent sentiment. Chancery's influence extends beyond the borders of the courthouse, and infects the domestic sphere. Thus, Dickens transforms locations of peace and tranquility into places imbedded with anxiety, transforming the familiar into a site of phantasmagoria.

The very title of Dickens's novel promotes a closer look at the significance of persons' homes. In her article on the symbolism of the house, Clare Cooper compares the divisions of the house (interior and façade) to the fragmentation of psychic space (self and nonself).⁴ Dickens distorts the domain of the interior and the façade, often illustrating a correspondence which demonstrates Freud's notion of the subconscious.⁴ For example, Tom Jarndyce cannot suppress his angst, and Bleak House becomes a visual reflection of his tumultuous state of mind. The transformation of Bleak House over the years exemplifies the correlation between a house and its owner, the interior and the façade, and appearance and reality. When Tom Jarndyce was its owner, the house became an extension of his state of mind, mirroring his suicide: "[T]he brains seemed to me to have been blown out of the house too; it was so shattered and ruined."⁵ After inheriting Bleak House, John Jarndyce's insistence on distancing himself from the cursed suit allows the house to heal and become a place of light, warmth, comfort, and hospitality. Bleak House begins to become synonymous with its owner by making "no pretensions" but providing "a comfortable little place."⁶ Just as the curse of the Jarndyce and Jarndyce case is not blotted from John's life, the anxiety from the curse is not expunged from his house or his sensibilities. Instead, John tries to entrap the curse by banning it to the Growlery.⁷ However, John Jarndyce's psychic torment from the suit continues to present itself outside of Bleak house. In his effort to prevent the curse from spreading its turmoil, he still attempts to contain it within a room: "I [Esther] went to my Guardian after breakfast, in the room that was our town-substitute for the Growlery."⁸ John remains hopeful that Esther can make the Growlery futile: "You will sweep them so neatly out of *our* sky, in the course of your housekeeping, Esther, that one of these days, we shall have to abandon the Growlery, and nail up the door."⁹ Bleak House survives amidst Chancery's despair and destruction, because its inhabitants continually try to combat Chancery's effects. Other homes do not fare as well.

The Jellyby's home mimics Chancery's dehumanizing effects. With the state of the Jellyby's household affairs, Dickens creates an analogy to Chancery in terms of chaos, disorder, and depravity. Chancery is in such a state of confusion that nihilism is the only solution: "If all the injustice it has committed, and all the misery it has caused, could only be locked up with it, and the whole burnt away in a great funeral pyre,—why, so much the better."¹⁰ Mrs. Jellyby continually fixates her energies upon public affairs, but she denies any attention to her own home: "[Mrs. Jellyby] could see nothing nearer than Africa!"¹¹ Her distracted and oblivious state of mind creates a muddle of a house, similar to the mess Chancery propitiates throughout London. Mrs. Jellyby's negligence turns her children into the very barbaric state that Mrs. Jellyby's Barriboola Gha project seeks to remedy:

"Then I [Caddy] mentioned Peepy's coming to stay with me; and then Pa began to cry again, and said the children were Indians."

"Indians, Caddy."

"Yes," said Caddy, "Wild Indians. And Pa said . . . that he was sensible that the best thing that could happen to them was, their being all Tomahawked together."¹²

Mr. Jellyby's radical solution echoes the anonymous narrator's severe suggestion, furthering the correlation between Chancery's neglect and Mrs. Jellyby's neglect.

As the matron of the house, Mrs. Jellyby's duty is to provide an inviting home for her family and a safe haven from the inconsistent outside domain for her husband. She fails to fulfill her domestic obligations, because she becomes too distracted by a variety of other projects, particularly those that are public: "She has devoted herself to an extensive variety of public subjects, at various times, and is at present (until something else attracts her) devoted to the subject of Africa."¹³ At the end of *Bleak House*, Mrs. Jellyby abandons the Barriboola Gha project and takes up women's rights. Her person reflects her distracted state of mind:

Mrs. Jellyby had very good hair, but was too much occupied with her African duties to brush it. The shawl in which she had been loosely muffled, dripped on

to her chair when she advanced to us; and as she turned to resume her seat, we could not help noticing that her dress didn't nearly meet up the back.¹⁴

Additionally, her house reflects Mrs. Jellyby's diverted attention and half-finished projects:

I had two upper rooms . . . They were excessively bare and disorderly, and the curtain to my window was fastened up with a fork. . . [T]here was no hot water . . . they couldn't find the kettle, and the boiler was out of order . . . It was impossible to shut the door of either room; for my lock, with no knob to it, looked as if it wanted to be wound up; and though the handle of Ada's went round and round with the greatest smoothness, it was attended with no effect whatever on the door.¹⁵

Just as the older version of Bleak House mimics Tom's suicide, Mrs. Jellyby's home imitates her flurried disposition. The Jellyby's household is in such a state of chaos and disorder that they are reduced to the concomitant traces of her projects: "[The Jellyby] family is nothing but bills, dirt, waste, noise, tumbles down stairs, confusion, and wretchedness."¹⁶ Her preoccupation with her campaigns (which never accomplish successful results) propagate a domicile environment of distemper and grimness. The damage that Mrs. Jellyby hurls upon her family is tantamount to the rack and ruin that Chancery ravages on London. Mrs. Jellyby's indifference towards her family is exemplified during her visit to her sick daughter:

Then there was Mrs. Jellyby. She would come occasionally, with her usual distraught manner, and sit calmly looking miles beyond her grandchild, as if her attention were absorbed . . . As bright-eyed as ever, as serene, and as untidy, she would say, "Well, Caddy, child, and how do you do to-day?" And then would sit amiably smiling, and taking no notice of the reply; or would sweetly glide off into a calculation of the number of letters she had lately received and answered . . . This she would always do with a serene contempt for our limited sphere of action, not to be disguised.¹⁷

Unable and unwilling to acknowledge Caddy or others around her, Mrs. Jellyby sits in the same foggy quality as the Lord High Chancellor: "[W]ith a foggy glory round his head . . . where he can

see nothing but fog . . . mistily engaged in one of the ten thousand stages of an endless cause.”¹⁸

Both the Lord High Chancellor and Mrs. Jellyby have created such a circumstance of pandemonium that those found within their circle of destruction have their humanity revoked and stifled.

Mrs. Jellyby's inhumane manner of managing her household denies her family their humanity, and her depraved indifference reduces them to objects, often forcing them to identify with them. Ignoring her own flesh and blood, Mrs. Jellyby considers her project her “favourite child.”¹⁹ Then, she only sees her own daughter in terms of her African project. As her amanuensis, Caddy wallows at her reduction to the role she performs for her mother: “I am only pen and ink to *her*.”²⁰ Severely denied and neglected, Caddy develops a fixation on her pen, demonstrating her aggression toward her mother: “But what principally struck us was a jaded, and unhealthy-looking . . . girl, at the writing-table, who sat biting the feather of her pen.”²¹ Mrs. Jellyby's unfulfilled maternal obligations also cause anxiety to Peepy, who constantly withdraws to spaces that mimic a safe retreat (similar to a womb), such as his “cave under the piano.”²²

The Jellyby's state of affairs vitiates Mr. Jellyby. As Mrs. Jellyby's passive husband, he longs for his dissolution. Instead of performing as man of the house, Mr. Jellyby is emasculated and silenced:

I [Esther] was a little curious to know who the mild bald gentleman in spectacles was, who dropped into a vacant chair . . . As he never spoke a word . . . It was not until we left the table, and he remained alone with Richard, that the possibility of his being Mr. Jellyby ever entered my head.²³

Even when Mr. Jellyby attempts to express any opinions, he is incapable and finds more consolation in the walls than in his wife:

Mr. Jellyby was frequently opening his mouth after dinner without saying anything. It was a habit of his. He opened his mouth now, a great many times, and shook his head in a melancholy manner . . . Mr. Jellyby groaned, and laid his head against the wall again; and this was the only time I ever heard him make any approach to expressing his sentiments.²⁴

Mr. Jellyby's habit of finding solace in the walls shapes a house where visible traces of his dejection are manifested: "Look at the corner, I plainly perceived the mark of Mr. Jellyby's head against the wall. It was consolatory to know that he had found such a resting-place for it."²⁵ The flatness of his character and his role within the novel is analogous to those walls that seem to comfort Mr. Jellyby. Mr. Jellyby's torment is further revealed in his advice to Caddy in her preparation for her marriage to Prince: "My poor girl, you have not been very well taught how to make a home for your husband; but unless you mean with all your heart to strive to do it, you had better murder him than marry him if you really love him."²⁶ The same extirpation needed to eliminate the havoc wreaked by Chancery is proposed to Caddy before the misdeeds of her mother are repeated. Denied his humanity and voice, Mr. Jelly seeks comfort in the walls, and eventually mimics them, becoming a figure in the background: fixed, mute, and inanimate.

Jo's broom not only is metaphorically linked to his role within the novel but also is symbolic of his presence within Victorian society. With his broom, Jo unconsciously engages in compulsive repetition, where he repeatedly engages in the trauma that mars him: abandonment.²⁷ When the orphan Jo is introduced to the Coroner for his testimony, his connection to his broom is emphasized: "Name, Jo. Nothing else that he knows on. . . No, father, no mother, no friends. Never been to school. What's home? Knows a broom's a broom, and knows it's wicked to tell a lie. Don't recollect who told him about the broom, or about the lie, but knows both."²⁸ With no solid, lasting connections to anyone, the broom becomes a very important part of his world; that is, it becomes his world, and he often uses it as an extension of himself: "Jo thrusts the handle of his broom between the bars of the gate, and, with his utmost power of elaboration, points it out."²⁹ Even when Jo remains unnamed, he can be identified by his broom: "it then, with an old broom it carries, softly sweeps the step, and makes the archway clean."³⁰ His reduced to a broom represents his reduction to an object within society, no longer occupying a place among of his peers: "He is . . . [an] article . . . He is not of the same order of things, not of the same place in creation. He is of no order and no place; neither of the beasts, nor of humanity."³¹ Indifferent to his humanity, most others in *Bleak House* treat him as an object. After the Coroner determines his testimony (or more importantly him) to be of no use, he orders that

the boy be put aside, so the “rejected witness” goes to the corner.³² Jo bemoans his perpetual state of being shoved into some other corner of the earth: “‘I’m always a moving on, sir,’ cries the boy, wiping away his grimy tears with his arm. ‘I’ve always been a moving and a moving on, ever since I was born. Where can I possible move to, sir, more nor I do move!’.”³³ Jo becomes stuck in a perpetual state of dereliction. Jo is forced to constantly “move on” in the same manner in which he perpetually sweeps the dirt off the streets. Then, when it is determined that his services are needed, he is treated like an instrument, a tool, an object that will be discarded after its intended purpose is fulfilled. Mr. Chadband uses Jo as a part of his sermon, but he makes Jo insignificant by leaving him unnamed and associated with the slums: “We have here among us, my friends,” says Chadband, “a Gentile and a Heathen, a dweller in the tents of Tom-all-Alone’s, and a mover-on upon the surface of the earth.”³⁴ He even refers to Jo as an “instrument” in his hands which he will “employ” and adjusts Jo “like a lay-figure.”³⁵ When Jo becomes terminally ill, it is difficult to determine where to “dispose of” Jo.³⁶ Dirty, ragged Jo is seen and treated as disposable as the broom that he keeps under his arm.

Also symbolic of their role within the novel, the Dedlocks are constantly compared to their portraits. The anonymous narrator introduces the reader to the dead and stagnant world of fashion, where the Dedlocks reside. The Dedlocks are presented as an archaic and decaying society, because they are too self-involved to notice the world around them. Instead of progressing, they languish and putrefy until they nearly obliterate themselves: “The pictures of the Dedlocks past and gone have seemed to vanish into the damp walls in mere lowness of spirits.”³⁷ With the portraits as a metaphor for the Dedlocks in the wake of photographic development, they become synonymous with an antiquated and pretentious manner of representation. Sir Leicester Dedlock finds pride in the gout that has been passed down to him (another symbol of indulgence status); the gout is compared to the prosperous progeny depicted by the portraits: “It has come down, through the illustrious line, like the plate, or the pictures, or the place in Lincolnshire . . . Inside, his forefathers, looking on him from the walls, says, ‘Each of us was a passing reality here, and left this colored shadow of himself’.”³⁸ In *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science*, Ronald Thomas notes that there seems to be two competing modes of representation:

oil portraits of the wealthy and photographic portraits of the middle class.³⁹ The Dedlocks's oil portraits not only represent a station of affluence but also represent a languid lifestyle that affords the time and means to sit for a classical-style portrait. The fashionable world's continual state of ennui is exemplified by "[a] staring old Dedlock in a panel, as large as life and as dull" and culminates in Lady Dedlock's persistent mode of being "bored to death".⁴⁰ The Dedlocks's inaccessible legacy and passive manner is compared to taxidermy:

The whole race he represented as having evidently been, in life, what he called "stuffed people," – a large collection, glassy eyed, set up in the most approved manner on their various twigs and perches, very correct, perfectly free from animation, and always in glass cases.⁴¹

Even as the portraits that hang in the Dedlocks's estate signal distinction, so does their reproduction contribute to their fall. It is by her portrait that Lady Dedlock's likeness to Esther is noticed, and her portrait's reproduction and circulation foreshadows the dissemination of her secret. Just as her image independently circulates, her secret (identity) escapes her own control. As a mechanical reproduction publicly displayed, the image threatens Lady Dedlock's privacy and usurps control over her secret identity. In fact, her portrait will aid in the revelation of her secret. The reproduction of her visage also creates an opportunity for others to assert a form of control over her, because she often becomes reduced to her portrait. Guppy conflates Lady Dedlock with her portrait when he claims to hold "one of the members of a swanlike aristocracy" in his hand.⁴² In fact, Lady Dedlock's haughty and frigid disposition marks her as a walking portrait: "Heaven forbid that [anyone] should say a syllable in dispraise of any member of that excellent family; above all, of my Lady, whom the whole world admires; but if my Lady would only be . . . not quite so cold and distant."⁴³ Constantly a perfect picture of manners, style, and prestige yet aloof and phlegmatic, Lady Dedlock mimics the characteristics of the portrait with which she is so closely associated.

Lady Dedlock's relationship with portraits is more than a hallmark of status; it is a representation of her role within the novel. Lady Dedlock holds a dual role within the novel: first, as a symbol of affluence and secondly, as a symbol of unbridled passion. Painting has a

subjective nature in which a likeness to its subject can be created, while photography leans towards a much more objective constitution. Similar to the fallacy of authenticity represented in her portrait, Lady Dedlock conceals her scandalous history and puts on pretenses. However, as her image becomes distributed, the suppression of her secrets is no longer tenable. Her indiscretions are revealed, and she fulfills the role of the Fallen Woman, providing a paradigm of unbridled passion and a contrast to her daughter's Angel of the House role.

Instead of being denied humanity, Tulkinghorn denies others their humanity and relinquishes his own in the process. Tulkinghorn fully embraces the puissance from the hegemonic system of the law. Tulkinghorn experiences not only power but satisfaction in his restraint; and his person as well as his home reflect his suppression:

An Oyster of the old school, whom nobody can open . . . Like as he is to look at, so is his apartment in the dusk of the present afternoon. . . A thick and dingy Turkey-carpet muffles the floor where he sits, attended by two candles in old-fashioned silver candlesticks, that give a very insufficient light to his large room . . . everything that can have a lock has got one; no key is visible . . . He is a great reservoir of confidences, not to be so tapped.⁴⁴

There is no surrender of light or secrets found in himself or his home. His home is similar to the antiquated and atrophied Chancery, where resolve is a joke and cases merely pile up.

Tulkinghorn surpasses the professional conduct of a lawyer, who keeps his clients secrets, and perverts his power to exploit his clients. Under the guise of "protecting" Sir Leicester, Tulkinghorn threatens Lady Dedlock to remain committed to her customary routines and habits lest he reveal her indiscretions. He never elicits money, sex, or other frequent objects of blackmail. The contingency of his protection reveals his desire for preponderancy; he finds more dominance in possessing the power rather than dispensing it.

The pleasure Tulkinghorn finds in hoarding secrets is exemplified in the gratification he derives from his keys. Keys are an important motif in *Bleak House* and often symbolic of the larger mysteries of the novel. Where is the key document to end the Jarndyce and Jarndyce suit? What is the key to the mystery of Esther's lineage? Where is the key piece of evidence that

reveals Tulkinghorn's murderer? What is the key that links all of the disparate plots and characters together in the novel? However, any association between Tulkinghorn and keys signals a pursuit of preponderant power rather than a quest for truth, redemption, or revelation.

Tulkinghorn's keys become symbolic of his aspiration to dominance. Dickens increasingly describes Tulkinghorn in terms of the inanimate, with no kinship with the living and a likeness to his rusty keys. The narrator describes the manner in which the lawyer merely resides among Londoners without any real connection to them: "[T]he lawyer smoke-dried and faded, dwelling among mankind but not consorting with them."⁴⁵ He is as rusty as the keys that had "once belonged to doors of rooms or strong chests in lawyers' office," and he "is no more like flesh and blood, than a rusty old carbine."⁴⁶ Instead of being described in terms of human attributes, he is characterized as "mute, close, [and] irresponsible," akin to the likeness of the inanimate object to which he is analogous.⁴⁷ Tulkinghorn is continually described in terms of rust with "his rusty legs" and his smile which is as "dull and rusty as his pantaloons."⁴⁸ Dickens intensifies Tulkinghorn's symbolic relationship to his keys with sexualized scenes:

"Why, Lady Dedlock," says the lawyer, taking a chair at a little distance from her, and slowly rubbing his rusty legs up and down, up and down, up and down; "I am rather surprised by the course you have taken . . . It is no longer your secret. Excuse me. That is just the mistake. It is my secret . . . If it were your secret, Lady Dedlock, we should not be here, holding this conversation."⁴⁹

The satisfaction Tulkinghorn receives from the power of her secrets often manifests in an overtly sexualized manner:

[Tulkinghorn] taps his dry cheek with the key, as he addresses . . . Mademoiselle Hortense.

"Now, mistress," says the lawyer, tapping the key hastily upon the chimney-piece. "If you have anything to say, say it, say it."

"Sir, you have not use me well. You have been mean and shabby."

"Mean and shabby, eh?" returns the lawyer, rubbing his nose with the key.⁵⁰

Instead of using his hand, he goes on to rub his head with the key and tap his chin with the key.⁵¹

He continues to taunt Hortense with the key (or his secret):

Look, mistress, this is the key of my wine-cellar. It is a large key, but the keys of prisons are larger. In this city, there are houses of correction (where the treadmills are, for women) the gates of which are very strong and heavy, and no doubt the keys too. I am afraid a lady of your spirit and activity would find it and inconvenience to have one of those keys turned upon her for any length of time.⁵²

The secrets that Tulkinghorn uses to entrap others provide him with a gratification symbolic of his quest for power.

Tulkinghorn's keys and secrets that he uses to fetter others are analogous to the very system that he represents: Chancery which shackles Londoners in an unfair legal system. Esther is appalled at the complicity of Chancery:

To see everything going on so smoothly, and to think of the roughness of the suitors' lives and deaths; to see all that full dress and ceremony, and to think of the waste, and want, and beggared misery it represented; to consider that, while the sickness of hope deferred was raging in so many hearts, this polite show went calmly on from day to day, and year to year, in such good order and composure; to behold the Lord Chancellor, and the whole array of practitioners under him, looking at one another and at the spectators, as if nobody had ever heard that all over England the name in which they were assembled was a bitter jest: was held in universal horror, contempt, and indignation; was known for something so flagrant and bad.⁵³

Esther is struck by the Lord Chancellor's indifference, but more than that, she is repulsed by his and his practitioners' obstinate lack of responsibility. Chancery drains the life out of London leaving it in shambles: "[Y]ou might look in vain for Truth . . . between the registrar's red table and the silk gowns, with bills, cross-bills, answers, rejoinders, injunctions, affidavits, issues, references to masters, masters' reports, mountains of costly nonsense, piled before them."⁵⁴ The legal

documents pile up before them, no longer representing the Londoners who are petitioning for justice; instead, they indicate a reduction of equity to pile of papers that has lost its meaning. Justice is no longer tenable, because the system is apathetic.

Contrasting Chancery and its practitioners' indifference, Esther embodies compassion and warmth. Esther's kindness emanates from her, and she radiates in the novel as a summer sun. As a central character not only in terms of narration but also in terms of plot and mystery, she becomes a key element: "[S]trung together somewhere in great black space, there was a flaming necklace, or ring, or starry circle of some kind, of which *I* was one of the beads!"⁵⁵ Always jingling her sets of keys, they connote a felicitousness that is absent in Tulkynghorn. Instead of her keys being a metonym for repressive power, they are emblematic of her role as Angel of the House, her pivotal role in the plot of *Bleak House*, and her capacity for sympathy. As Angel of the House, Esther puts others' needs ahead of her own, always seeking to provide comfort for others. After their visit to the Jellybys's house, Ada praises Esther for the way that she naturally satisfies her role as a nurturer and comforter:

"Why, cousin John," said Ada, clasping her hands upon his arm, and shaking her head at me across him—for I wanted her to be quiet: "Esther was their friend directly. Esther nursed them, coaxed them to sleep, washed and dressed them, told them stories, kept them quiet, bought them keepsakes . . . and, was so thoughtful for me and so amiable!—No, no, I won't be contradicted, Esther dear! You know, you know, it's true!"⁵⁶

Humble Esther makes no dramatic spectacle about her duties (as Mrs. Jellyby and Mrs. Pardiggle do); instead, she easily and readily performs them. Her abilities earn her the keys of Bleak House, and those keys become a symbol of the trust placed in her as well as the quality of her capacities: "[A]fter she was gone, [I] stood looking at the basket [of keys], quite lost in the magnitude of my trust."⁵⁷ When she joins Ada, John Jarndyce, and Skimpole in visiting the Neckett children, the landlord automatically hands her the keys: "[S]he handed me a key across the counter. I glanced at the key, and glanced at her; but, she took it for granted that I knew what to do with it."⁵⁸ Of course, she does know what to do with the key.

Esther employs the keys as a reminder of the importance of her self-denial. Esther's manner of interaction with her keys is symptomatic of her endeavor to provide warmth and cheer for everyone. Esther's godmother continually emphasizes the disgrace of her existence, so Esther makes up her mind to commit to a life of service: "I would try, as hard as ever I could, to repair the fault I had been born with . . . , and would strive as I grew up to be industrious, contented and kind-hearted, and to do some good to someone, and win some love to myself if I could."⁵⁹ Resolved to always be industrious, Esther constantly reminds herself of her personal pledge: "It was not for me to muse over by-gones, but to act with a cheerful spirit and grateful heart. So I said to myself, 'Esther, Esther, Esther! Duty, my dear' and gave my little basket of housekeeping keys such a shake."⁶⁰ Esther constantly either jingles her keys to soothe herself to sleep or jingles them as a reminder to be cheerful and hardworking. In fact, she uses her housekeeping as a coping mechanism in uncomfortable situations, such as a rejection of Guppy's proposal: "I sat there for another hour or more, finishing my books and payments, and getting though plenty of business. Then, I arranged my desk, and put everything away, and was so composed and cheerful that I thought I had quite dismissed this unexpected incident."⁶¹ Then after determining to accept John Jarndyce's proposal, she not only jingles her housekeeping keys but also kisses them before returning them to the basket.⁶² Always unsure of her place among her peers, she often interacts with her keys in an intimate manner, because they are the reification of the sentiments towards her. Hesitant of her qualifications for love, she often feels more comfortable with the objects of their affections.

The victims of Chancery and its afflictions are often treated as the objects that plague the novel. Drained of life and humanity, the destitute are often compared to inanimate: "[H]e was like an empty post-office, for he hadn't a single note in him."⁶³ In fact, the inanimate often perform as characters: "[There] lay the old house, with its terraces and turrets . . . like the obdurate and un pitying watcher of my mother's misery."⁶⁴ The manner in which many of the characters interact with objects is often unsettling, such as Mrs. Smallweed bowing to objects or Mr. Smallweed throwing Judy in lieu of his pillow.⁶⁵ I believe part of their identification with objects is a result of their inability to effectively communicate with each other. Mr. Snagsby uses his cough in place of

words: "Mr. Snagsby having said this in a very plaintive manner, throws in a cough of general application to fill up all the blanks."⁶⁶ Mr. George with his pipe in-hand communicates his state of mind through pipe gestures: "Mr. George, who has put aside his pipe . . . as if he were not particularly pleased with the turn the conversation has taken."⁶⁷ When Dickens uses specific objects associated with a character, he often reduces the character to that object. For example, when Smallweed becomes angry, he uses a pipe as an illustration:

Mr. Smallweed, purposely balking himself in an aim at the trooper's head, throws the pipe on the ground and breaks it to pieces.

"That's what it means, my dear friend. I'll smash you. I'll crumble you. I'll powder you. Go to the devil!"⁶⁸

The pipe is a substitute for George and reinforces the dehumanization that many of the novel's characters face.

By vacillating between objects that are animated and humans that are de-animated, Dickens creates an unsettling world. The homes, shops, and offices are meant to disturb sensibilities, reinforcing a need for humanity and community. Of course the character that most embodies those sensibilities are Esther, who provides the places she goes with compassion, which is why others find comfort in her handkerchief. After Esther uses her handkerchief in an act of condolence and sympathy to cover the dead baby in the brickmaker's house, it becomes an object of significance. After Lady Dedlock discovers that Esther is her daughter, she takes Esther's "handkerchief away with her as a little keepsake."⁶⁹ The handkerchief is more than a token of kindness; it is an extension of herself to which others cling to in her absence. The handkerchief serves as a temporary substitute for not only her empathy but for her person. Even though Bleak House still contains an overwhelming amount of stuff, they agree in neatness:

All the moveables, from the wardrobes to the chairs and tables, hangings, glasses, even to the pincushions and scent-bottles on the dressing-tables, displayed the same quaint variety. . . their display of the whitest linen, and their storing-up, wheresoever the existence of a drawer, small or large, rendered it possible, of quantities of rose-leaves and sweet lavender. Such, with its

illuminated windows, softened her and there by shadows of curtains, shining out.⁷⁰

Despite the amount of things contained in Bleak House, they are presented not as foreboding but rather with quiet repose. Dickens's characters need to distance themselves from destructive forces (such as Chancery) to reinstate their humanity.

CONCLUSION

To interest and affect the general mind in behalf of anything that is clearly wrong—to stimulate and rouse the public soul to a compassionate or indignant feeling that it must not be—without obtruding any pet theory of cause or cure, and so throwing off allies as they spring up—I believe to be one of Fiction's highest uses. And this is the use to which I try to turn it.

Charles Dickens¹

This study of *Bleak House* began with my interest in The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations and its relationship to the novel. The Great Exhibition was paradoxical to Dickens: an event designed to broadcast England's progress only reminded Dickens of London's deficiencies. The Exhibition's Crystal Palace stood as a glimmering showcase of the things of industry rather than the labor or materials used to produce them. Even though the raw materials and the machines of industry were displayed, they were spectacles rather than instructive. The displayed items lacked price tags and were distanced from the viewer by ropes, glass cases, or policemen. The phantasmagorical presentation of commodities heralds a manner of observation in which the observer becomes preoccupied with the end product and the byproducts are concealed and labor is mystified. *Bleak House* does not betray its readers by caching repercussions of England's failings, but provides a text to examine the causes of want and inefficiency.

Dickens's novel is largely absorbed with a carping view of the abuses not only of Chancery but also of privileged classes (both aristocratic and middle class). His social critique is extensive and profuse, holding everyone accountable whether they are directly or indirectly responsible. Few characters remain unscathed, and even those like Jo who are depicted in

predominantly sympathetic terms as victims still demonstrate infection. In a review of *Bleak House*, the magnitude of his assessment is observed: “[N]ever in any former work has Mr Dickens made use of a plot so evidently planned before-hand with minute considerations, or throughout so elaborately studied.”² Only an extensive review of the totality of London can provide the breadth of critique that Dickens sought to accomplish.

The range of Dickens’s social appraisal is remarkable, but his execution of it is innovative. The same manner in which the Great Exhibition was planned and articulated, so is Dickens’s novel organized. A multifarious novel, Dickens employs elements of the Gothic novel, the Detective novel, and the Romance novel. Each generic convention is akin to a wing in Crystal Palace, showcasing another facet to Dickens’s argument. Without letting one of the manifold traits dominate, he maintains equilibrium by employing each genre to address a different aspect of his objective. The aim of *Bleak House* extends beyond a critique; Dickens creates a manual for his readers. In the changing atmosphere of penal reform, a more passive and subliminal mode of discipline emerges which Dickens interweaves in the diversity of genres. Dickens discretely directs his readers to participate in the demarcation between normal and abnormal, right and wrong, and guilty and innocent. The harmful characters that exemplify injurious institutions are infused with Gothic tropes warning the reader to be vigilant. The detection in *Bleak House* is not limited to one character but utilized by most. There is no single mystery at the heart of the novel; instead, the novel consists of numerous secrets. By utilizing a theme of investigation, an atmosphere of introspection is created. Lightly developed in the early part of the novel, the romance plots do not take precedence until the latter part. Esther’s absurdly sentimental narration comprises half of the novel and prevents the readers from being overwhelmed by the amount of death, despair, and pain portrayed in the Gothic-like narrations. Amidst a plethora of failed romantic relationships, Esther and Woodcourt provide a model of success. However, the terms of its success are complicated: Esther’s marriage is a result of John Jarndyce handing her off to Woodcourt and they only create a second Bleak House. Through a variety of genres, Dickens fosters a reflective milieu where readers can examine the metaphorical facets of the novel and determine their own personal relevance.

Thomas Richards has noticed that in “Dickens’s novels furniture, textiles, watches, handkerchiefs seem to live and breathe.”³ At times, the objects in *Bleak House* begin to function in lieu of people, similar to the manner in which the commodities in Crystal Palace supplant the workers and the machines. For example, it is Esther’s handkerchief that provides comfort to the brickmakers and Lady Dedlock in her absence. J. Hillis Miller claims that Dickens encourages “the reader to consider the names, gestures and appearances of the characters as indications of some hidden truth about them.”⁴ Often characters mimic objects: Tulkinghorn’s persona is as rusty, cold, and inanimate as the keys that he possesses. Continually compared to their portraits, the Dedlock family is simply a faded picture of what their family used to be. The close relationship between characters and their objects demonstrates a psychic connection. Freud’s study of unconscious desires and their unusual manifestations helps explain affiliation with between people and the bond with their things.

In the introduction, I ask if Esther is Dickens’s answer to the Condition of England. While Esther is the nexus of good within the novel, her character often provides more of a foil than a definitive resolution. Esther’s goodness is grossly overstated as much as the other characters, such as Tulkinghorn and Skimpole, are banefully embellished. However, with Esther, Dickens does imply a course that must be pursued if England is to progress. Victorian domestic ideology is reified in Esther, who suppresses her own desires to provide a safe haven for those in *Bleak House*. She shines within the novel as a beacon of hope and an example of progress. I think what Dickens suggests through Esther is that his readers might collectively find an answer to England’s problems through emulating her. If everyone aspires to first address the deficits in their own lives while recognizing the impact of their actions on others, then a healthy society can begin to emerge.

NOTES

INTRODUCTION

¹ Quote from Charles Dickens's preface to his *Bleak House* (New York: Modern Library, 2002): xxxiii.

² Quoted in *The Letters of Charles Dickens*, eds. Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson, and Nina Burgis. Vol. 6. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988. 298.

³ Dickens xxxiii.

⁴ Dickens xxxiv.

⁵ Kenneth Fielding discusses criticism concerning Dickens's use of prototypes in "*Bleak House* and Dickens' Originals: 'The Romantic Side of Familiar Things'" *Dickens Studies Annual* 24 (1996): 119-134. For an excellent source of Dickens's prototypes see George Ford and Sylvere Monod, eds. *Bleak House: An Authoritative and Annotated Text, Illustrations, A Note on the Text, Genesis and Composition, Backgrounds, Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1977).

⁶ John Butt, "'Bleak House' in the Context of 1851" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 10.1 (1955): 13. There is an overwhelming amount of scholarship concerning Dickens's participation in contemporary debates. See Trevor Blount's discussion of *Bleak House* in terms of the scientific review of spontaneous combustion in "Dickens and Mr. Krook's Spontaneous Combustion" *Dickens Studies Annual* 1 (1970): 183-211. Philip James Wilson observes the relevance of the opening scene to emerging scientific discoveries in "Notice On the Megalosaurus or Great Fossil Lizard of Stonefield; Observations On the Beginning of *Bleak House*" *The Dickensian* 78.2 (1982): 97-104.

⁷ Catherine Gallagher, "Marxism and The New Historicism" *The New Historicism*, Ed.H. Aram Veesser (New York: Routledge, 1989) 37.

⁸ For more on new historicism, see Claire Colebrook's *New Literary Histories : New historicism and contemporary criticism* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1997); John Brannigan discusses the basic tenets of new historicism as well as its perceived limits in "Introduction: History, Power, and Politics in the Literary Artifact," *Literary Theories: A Reader and Guide*, ed. Julian Wolfreys (Washington Square: New York UP, 1999); and John Brannigan gives a comprehensive analysis of New Historicist doctrine and an introduction to important theorists who argue its relevance in *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: Transitions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998).

For more on the complications of a Freudian, new historicist reading of literature, see *Historicism, Psychoanalysis, and Early Modern Culture*, eds. Carla Mazzio and Douglas Trevor (New York: Routledge, 2000).

⁹ John Brannigan, *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: Transitions* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 3.

¹⁰ John Kucich discusses Dickens's relevance to England's cultural history in "Dickens," *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John Richetti (New York: Columbia UP, 1994): 381-406.

¹¹ The Great Exhibition is never openly referenced in any of his novels or short stories. However, in his personal letters, Dickens often voiced his complaints concerning the Great Exhibitions. Most of his articles in *Household Words* that are concerned with the Great Exhibition are more informative than critical.

¹² Storey, Graham, Kathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, eds. *The Letters of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 525, 542.

¹³ John Butt and Kathleen Tillotson, *Dickens at Work* (London: Methuen & Co., 1957).

¹⁴ Philip Landon, "Great Exhibitions: Representations of the Crystal Palace in Mayhew, Dickens, and Dostoevsky" *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 20 (1997): 31.

¹⁵ Landon 38.

¹⁶ Robert Tracy, "Lighthousekeeping: *Bleak House* and the Crystal Palace," *Dickens Studies Annual* 33 (2003): 25-53.

¹⁷ Lyn Pykett loosely links the variety of genres to the representation of Britain's anatomy in the novel in *Charles Dickens: Critical Issues* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2002): 129. Nils Claussøn addresses the multi-genre issue in "Dickens's *Genera Mixta*: What Kind of a Novel Is *Hard Times*?" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 52.2 (2010): 157-180.

¹⁸ J. Hillis Miller, *Victorian Subjects* (Durham: Duke UP, 1991) 179.

¹⁹ Peter K. Garrett, *The Victorian Multiplot Novel: Studies in Dialogical Form* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1980) 2.

²⁰ Garrett 4.

²¹ Peter J. Kitson, "The Victorian Gothic." *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, eds. William Baker and Kenneth Womack (Westport: Greenwood, 2002) 166 and Peter K. Garrett, *Gothic Reflections* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2003) 2.

²² Garrett *Gothic Reflections* 3.

²³ D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988) 58-59.

²⁴ James Walton, "Conrad, Dickens, and the Detective Novel" *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 23.4 (1969) 456.

²⁵ Lillian Nayder, "Victorian Detective Fiction" *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, eds. William Baker and Kenneth Womack (Westport: Greenwood, 2002) 178.

²⁶ Ronald R. Thomas, "Detection in the Victorian Novel" *The Cambridge Companion to the Victorian Novel*, ed. Deirdre David (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2001) 171.

²⁷ Peter Thoms, *Detection & Its Designs: Narrative & Power in 19th-Century Detective Fiction* (Athens: Ohio UP, 1998).

²⁸ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 186.

²⁹ Susan Strehle and Mary Paniccia Carden, eds, *Doubled Plots: Romance and History* (Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 2003) xii.

³⁰ Deborah Epstein Nord, *Walking the Victorian Streets: Women, Representation, and the City* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1995) 412-413.

³¹ Laurie Langbauer, "Dickens's Streetwalkers: Women and the Form of Romance" *ELH* 53.2 (1986) 422.

³² Dorothy Van Ghent, "The Dickens World: A View from Todgers's" *Twentieth Century Views*, ed. Martin Price (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1967) 24.

³³ Murray Roston, "Dickens and the Tyranny of Objects" *Dickens Studies Annual* 23 (1994) 2.

³⁴ Elaine Freedgood, "Commodity Criticism and Victorian Thing Culture: The Case of Dickens" *Contemporary Dickens*, eds. Eileen Gillooly and Deirdre David (Columbus: Ohio State UP, 2009) 153.

³⁵ Eiichi Hara, "Bleak House and the Reign of Metaphor" *Poetica* 36 (1992): 55-68.

³⁶ Michael Hollington, "The Voice of Objects in *The Old Curiosity Shop*" *Australasian Journal of Victorian Studies* 14.1 (2009) 1.

CHAPTER ONE

¹ Sabine Clemm, "Amidst the Heterogeneous Masses': Charles Dickens's *Household Words* and the Great Exhibition of 1851" *Nineteenth-CenturyContexts* 27.3 (2005): 209.

² Graham Storey, Kathleen Tillotson and Nina Burgis, eds. *The Letters of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 371.

³ John Butt, "'Bleak House' in the Context of 1851" *Nineteenth-CenturyFiction* 10.1 (1955): 3.

⁴ Jeffrey A. Auerbach *The Great Exhibition of 1851: A Nation on Display* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999) 129. The essays in Louise Purbrick, ed. *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2001) are extremely useful in understanding the failures of the Great Exhibition.

⁵ Storey, Tillotson, and Burgis 57.

⁶ Auerbach 130. The Great Exhibition did not feature the working class operators of the machines displayed, and Dickens does not include any description of the brickmaker's labor. While the Great Exhibition strove to eliminate the "dirty" side of labor, Dickens strives to highlight the conditions of those omitted laborers.

⁷ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (New York: Modern Library, 2002) 3.

⁸ Auerbach 1, Patrick Beaver, *The Crystal Palace: A Portrait of Victorian Enterprise* (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1970) 35. In fact, Dickens's imagery for the opening scene is similar to an etching by George Cruikshank in which every inch of London's streets as well as the buildings are filled with people going to the Great Exhibition. Eric de Maré, *London 1851: The Year of the Great Exhibition* (London: Folio Society, 1972) 22.

⁹ K. J. Fielding, *The Speeches of Charles Dickens* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1960) 128-129.

¹⁰ Butt 10.

¹¹ Dickens 3.

¹² Dickens's involvement with the courts and its relevance to the novel is explored by Marina Bondi and Silvia Cavalieri in "Disadvantage Before the Law: Bleak House," *Textus* 21.3 (2008) 561-580.

¹³ Dickens 4.

¹⁴ In 1851, dinosaurs were of growing interest. Dickens chose to use the Megalosaurus over other known dinosaurs because it was carnivorous and the very name conjures an image of a monster. Philip James Wilson, "Notice on the Megalosaurus or great fossil lizard of Stonefield; observations on the beginning of *Bleak House*," *Dickensian* 78 (1982): 97-104.

¹⁵ Dickens 5, James E. Boasberg, "Chancery as Megalosaurus: Lawyers, Courts, and Society in *Bleak House*" *UHSL* 21 (1989):40.

¹⁶ Clemm 209.

¹⁷ Storey, Tillotson, and Burgis 457.

¹⁸ Storey, Tillotson, and Burgis 429.

¹⁹ Quoted in Emily Heady, "The Polis's Different Voices: Narrating England's Progress in Dickens's *Bleak House*" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 48.4 (2006): 313.

²⁰ Deborah Wynne, "Responses to the 1851 Exhibition in *Household Words*." *The Dickensian* 97:3 (2001) 231.

²¹ Auerbach 91.

²² Storey, Tillotson, and Burgis 428.

²³ Dickens 4.

²⁴ Dickens 6.

²⁵ Dickens 53.

²⁶ Dickens 616.

²⁷ Dickens 96.

²⁸ Clemm 212.

²⁹ David Plotkin discusses the significance of disease in "Home-made Savages:

Cultivating English Children in *Bleak House*" *Pacific Coast Philology* 32.1 (1997):17-31. Also see Eric G. Lorentzen "'Obligations of Home': Colonialism, Contamination, and Revolt in *Bleak House*" *Dickens Studies Annual* 34 (2004): 155-184; Simon Joyce, "Inspector Bucket versus Tom-all-Alone's: *Bleak House*, Literary Theory, and the Condition-of-England in the 1850s" *Dickens Studies Annual* 32 (2002): 129-150; Timothy L. Carens, "The Civilizing Mission at Home: Empire, Gender, and National Reform in *Bleak House*" *Dickens Studies Annual* 26 (1998): 121-145; and F.S. Schwarzbach, "A Note on *Bleak House*: John Jarndyce and the East Wind" *Dickens Studies Newsletter* 6 (1975): 82-84.

³⁰ Dickens 217.

³¹ Dickens 628.

³² Dickens 616.

³³ Storey, Tillotson, and Burgis 698.

³⁴ Hugh Cunningham, "Dickens as a Reformer" *A Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed.

David Paroissien (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008) 159-173.

³⁵ Similarly, Thomas Carlyle relates the story of a poor Irish widow whose typhus infection spreads and kills seventeen other people. In the widow's plea for help, she begs those around her to help their "sister," but they deny any responsibility. Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (New York: New York UP, 1977) 150-151.

³⁶ Dickens 217.

³⁷ Dickens 210.

³⁸ Storey, Tillotson, and Burgis 707.

³⁹ Henry Morely, "How Charity Begins at Home" *Household Words* ????? 401.

⁴⁰ Dickens 413.

⁴¹ Dickens 43.

⁴² Dickens 413.

⁴³ Vanessa D. Dickerson, *Keeping the Victorian House : A Collection of Essays* (New York: Garland Pub, 1995): xiii.

⁴⁴ Dickerson xiv.

⁴⁵ Dickens 38.

⁴⁶ Dickens 101.

⁴⁷ Dickens 108.

⁴⁸ Dickens 104.

⁴⁹ Lorentzen 160.

⁵⁰ Lorentzen 167.

⁵¹ Dickerson xxi.

⁵² Dickens 101.

⁵³ Dickens 85.

⁵⁴ Frances Armstrong, *Dickens and the Concept of Home* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1990) 85.

⁵⁵ Robert Tracy, "Lighthousekeeping: *Bleak House* and the Crystal Palace" *Dickens Studies Annual* 33 (2003): 29.

⁵⁶ Dickens 65.

CHAPTER TWO

¹ Quoted in Peter K. Garrett, *The Victorian Multiplot Novel: Studies in Dialogical Form*. New Haven (Yale UP, 1980) 1.

² Thomas Carlyle, *Past and Present* (New York: New York UP, 1977).

³ In her discussion of the Condition-of-England novels, Mary Poovey touches upon the presence of competing subplots as well as the mixtures of genres in the novels. "Disraeli,

Gaskell, and the Condition of England," *The Columbia History of the British Novel*, ed. John Richetti (New York: Columbia UP, 1994) 508-532. Nils Claussøn examines Dickens's mixture of genres in *Hard Times* and its correspondence to the social problem novel. "Dickens's *Genera Mixta*: What Kind of a Novel is *Hard Times*?" *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 52 (2010): 157-180. For more on the Victorian social problem novel, see James G. Nelson, "The Victorian Social Problem Novel," *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, eds. William Baker and Kenneth Womack, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002) 163-176 and Catherine Gallagher, *The Industrial Reformation of English Fiction: Social Discourse and Narrative Form, 1832-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985).

⁴ Garrett 4.

⁵ Michel Foucault, "The Eye of Power" *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 153.

⁶ For a comprehensive view of the evolution of the Gothic in literature, see David Punter and Glennis Byron, eds., *The Gothic* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004) or Catherine Spooner and Emma McEvoy, eds., *The Routledge Companion to Gothic* (London: Routledge, 2007).

⁷ Jarlath Killeen discusses the Victorian transformation of the Gothic in *History of the Gothic: Gothic Literature 1825-1914* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2009). Julian Wolfreys examines not only the transformation of the Gothic but also the diversity of the Gothic in Victorian literature in *Victorian Gothic: Literary and Cultural Manifestations in the Nineteenth Century*, eds. Ruth Robbins and Julian Wolfreys (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000). A general discussion concerning Victorian Gothic can be found in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, eds. William Baker and Kenneth Womack, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002).

⁸ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995) 184.

⁹ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 183.

¹⁰ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 183.

¹¹ Robert D. Hume, "Gothic Versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel" *PMLA* 84:2 (1969) 286.

¹² Dickens 3.

¹³ Dickens 34.

¹⁴ Dickens 3.

¹⁵ Dickens 4.

¹⁶ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 39.

¹⁷ Dickens 14.

¹⁸ Pritchard 438.

¹⁹ Dickens 326.

²⁰ Dickens 9.

²¹ Dickens 10.

²² Dickens 394.

²³ Dickens 615-616.

²⁴ Dickens 91.

²⁵ Dickens 25.

²⁶ Dickens 334.

²⁷ Robert Mighall specifically addresses Dickens's use of the Gothic for his reformist agenda in "Dickens and the Gothic," *A Companion to Charles Dickens*, ed. David Paroissien (Malden: Blackwell, 2008) 81-96. Carol Snell draws connections between Dickens's vampiric characters and the problems in London in "Bleak House: The Need for Social Exorcism," *Dickens Studies Newsletter* 11 (1980): 70-73. Christopher Herbert explains that Dickens uses the occult as a metaphor for the changes in Victorian life in "The Occult in *Bleak House*," *Charles Dickens's Bleak House*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987) 121-138; and Kay Hetherly Wright discusses Dickens's employment of the grotesque in *Bleak House* as an analogue to the urban chaos depicted in the novel in "The Grotesque and Urban Chaos in *Bleak House*," *Dickens Studies Annual* 21 (1992): 97-112. The varying forms of Gothic tropes used to depict the horrors of Victorian London are explored by Allan Pritchard in "The Urban Gothic of *Bleak House*," *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 45 (1991): 432-452.

²⁸ Dickens 218.

²⁹ Dickens 5.

³⁰ Dickens 96.

³¹ Dickens 97.

³² Dickens 489.

³³ Dickens 346.

³⁴ Dickens 346.

³⁵ Dickens 804.

³⁶ Dickens 489.

³⁷ Dickens 804.

³⁸ Dickens 539.

³⁹ Dickens 541.

⁴⁰ A.E. Murch M.A, *The Development of the Detective Novel* (Port Washington: Kennikat P, 1958).

⁴¹ Tzvetan Todorov, *The Poetics of Prose*, trans. Richard Howard (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1977).

⁴² Lillian Nayder explains the correlation between the rise of the detective novel and the organization of Metropolitan Police force during the nineteenth century in *A Companion to the Victorian Novel*, eds. William Baker and Kenneth Womack, (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002) 177-188. LeRoy Lad Panek examines Dickens's varying types of detectives in his novels in *An Introduction to the Detective Story*, (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987). A. E. Murch also considers the diversity of detectives in Dickens's novels in *The Development of the Detective Novel* by discussing the change in attitude towards the police due to Sir Robert Peel's modernization of the police force. Previously the Bow Street Runners were marked by corruption and inefficiency which had caused distrust in the capabilities of police figures, but the new version became an example of good order. In his study of the detective novel, Peter Thoms considers the diversity of "detectives" within *Bleak House in Detection & Its Designs: Narrative & Power in 19th-Century Detective Fiction* (Athens: Ohio UP, 1998). In addition to the rise of the detective novel during the nineteenth century, there was a rise in forensic

science which Ronald R. Thomas analyzes in *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999). Ian Ousby sees Dickens's treatment of Inspector Bucket as sympathetic to the new London detective in *Bloodhounds of Heaven: The Detective in English Fiction from Godwin to Doyle* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976), and James Walton claims that Dickens devotion to organized society inspired Bucket's character in "Conrad, Dickens, and the Detective Novel," *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 23 (1969): 446-462.

⁴³ Thomas 147.

⁴⁴ Dickens 749. Bucket's unassuming yet watchful character and the ways in which many of the characters self-punish illustrate the ways in which a successful execution of the law induces the community to internally regulate. See D.A. Miller's *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1988).

⁴⁵ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 201.

⁴⁶ Dickens 699.

⁴⁷ Dickens 622, 304.

⁴⁸ Dickens 699.

⁴⁹ Thoms 6.

⁵⁰ Dickens 640.

⁵¹ Dickens 648.

⁵² Dickens 700.

⁵³ Dickens 131.

⁵⁴ Dickens 131.

⁵⁵ Dickens 701.

⁵⁶ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 145.

⁵⁷ Dickens 659.

⁵⁸ Geoff Danaher, Tony Schirato and Jenn Webb, *Understanding Foucault* (London: SAGE Publications, 2000) 51.

⁵⁹ Dickens 309.

⁶⁰ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 149.

⁶¹ Dickens 755.

⁶² Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 152.

⁶³ Dickens xxxv.

⁶⁴ For more on romantic formulations, see Jean Radford's *The Progress of Romance: The Politics of Popular Fiction* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); Northrop Frye's *The Secular Scripture: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1976); John G. Cawelti's *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance: Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976); Pamela Regis's *A Natural History of the Romance Novel* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 2003); and Pierre Vitoux also discusses various forms of romance in "The Mode of Romance Revisited," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 49.4 (2007): 387-410. Vincent Newey discusses how Dickens's version of romanticism "points forward" while Byron's is more regressive and nostalgic in *Dickens Studies Annual* 33 (2003) 67-84.

⁶⁵ Radford 8.

⁶⁶ Northrop Frye, *Anatomy Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1957) 186.

⁶⁷ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 223.

⁶⁸ Laurie Langbauer discusses themes of the Fallen Woman and the Angel in the House in Dickens's novels. However, she argues that the streetwalker and the homebody both seek to escape patriarchal power structures. *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1990).

⁶⁹ For more on the cult of domesticity and the separation of spheres, see Tony Chapman's *Gender and Domestic Life: Changing Practices in Families and Households* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); Tony Chapman and Jenny Hockey, eds., *Ideal Homes? Social Change and Domestic Life* (London: Routledge, 1999); or Jane Lewis's *Women in England, 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Bloomington: Indian UP, 1984).

⁷⁰ Dickens 153.

⁷¹ Dickens 256.

⁷² Dickens 9.

⁷³ In “Class Discourse and Popular Agency in *Bleak House*,” Chris R. Vanden Bossche interprets Esther and Woodcourt’s marriage as a “union of middle-class domesticity” which rejects class identities, similar to Watt and Rosa’s marriage that rises out of the “ashes of the aristocracy” (23). *Victorian Studies* 47 (2004): 7-31.

⁷⁴ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 199.

⁷⁵ Dickens 219.

⁷⁶ The manner in which the anonymous narrator also makes hints or uses others’ voices to make up his narration further exemplifies the detachment of his narration. I mark the narrator as male due to the extreme contrast between the stylistic tendencies between Esther and the anonymous narrator. M.E. Grenander discusses the anonymous narrator in “The Mystery and the Moral: Point of View in Dickens’s *Bleak House*,” *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 10.4 (1956): 301-305. Richard T. Gaughan also recognizes the dissimilarity between the narrators in “Their Places are a Blank: The Two Narrators in *Bleak House*.” *Dickens Studies Annual* 21 (1992): 79-96.

⁷⁷ Dickens 16-17.

⁷⁸ Chapman *Ideal Homes?* 18.

⁷⁹ Radford 172.

⁸⁰ Rachel Ablow, *The Marriage of Minds: Reading Sympathy in the Victorian Marriage Plot* (Stanford:Stanford UP, 2007) 3.

⁸¹ Ablow 18-20.

⁸² Dickens 43.

⁸³ Dickens 98.

⁸⁴ Dickens 186.

⁸⁵ Dickens 196.

⁸⁶ Judith Rowbotham, *Good Girls Make Good Wives: Guidance for Girls in Victorian Fiction* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989).

⁸⁷ Dickens 816.

⁸⁸ Foucault *Discipline and Punish* 146.

⁸⁹ Dickens 26.

⁹⁰ Dickens 26.

⁹¹ Radford 9.

CHAPTER THREE

¹ Charles Dickens, *Bleak House* (New York: Modern Library, 2002) xxxv.

² Dickens 51.

³ These sites of anxiety in *Bleak House* are created by the contention between the conscious and unconscious. Sigmund Freud believed that the unconscious is created, in part, through the repression of ideas, fantasies, or memories. This repressed part of the unconscious is constantly trying to achieve gratification through surfacing (or crossing to the conscious) which creates anxiety. The unconscious often operates according to the pleasure principle, where unconscious desires seek to be relieved or gratified. However, if these drives are unable to be discharged, they create sites of contention. For a good introduction to Freud's sectioning of the subconscious see Joseph Sandler, Alex Holder, Christopher Dare, and Anna Ursula Dreher, *Freud's Models of the Mind: An Introduction* (Madison: International Universities Press, 1997). The text that I most heavily rely upon for Freudian concepts other than Freud's own writings is *Psycho-analysis: The Major Concepts*, eds. Burness E. Moore and Bernard D. Fine (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995).

⁴ Clare Cooper, "The House as Symbol," *Design & Environment* 3.3 (1972):131.

⁵ Dickens 96.

⁶ Dickens 68.

⁷ Dickens 94.

⁸ Dickens 177.

⁹ Dickens 98.

¹⁰ Dickens 9.

¹¹ Dickens 37.

¹² Dickens 409.

¹³ Dickens 35.

¹⁴ Dickens 38.

¹⁵ Dickens 40.

¹⁶ Dickens 184.

¹⁷ Dickens 670-671.

¹⁸ Dickens 4.

¹⁹ Dickens 329.

²⁰ Dickens 186.

²¹ Dickens 38.

²² Dickens 185.

²³ Dickens 41-42.

²⁴ Dickens 417.

²⁵ Dickens 527-528.

²⁶ Dickens 409.

²⁷ In "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," Freud analyzes the childhood game of *fort-da*, where a child plays a game of disappearance and return. The *fort-da* game represents the child's repetitive impulse to perform the trauma of maternal abandonment. Freud explains why some children repeat their trauma: "At the outset he was in a *passive* situation—he was overpowered by the experience; but, by repeating it, unpleasurable though it was . . . he took on an *active* part." Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989) 600.

²⁸ Dickens 147.

²⁹ Dickens 223.

³⁰ Dickens 150.

³¹ Dickens 628.

³² Dickens 147, 148.

³³ Dickens 263.

³⁴ Dickens 353.

³⁵ Dickens 352.

³⁶ Dickens 623.

³⁷ Dickens 10.

³⁸ Dickens 216.

³⁹ Ronald Thomas, *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1999).

⁴⁰ Dickens 155, 10.

⁴¹ Dickens 523.

⁴² Dickens 551.

⁴³ Dickens 155.

⁴⁴ Dickens 130-131.

⁴⁵ Dickens 573.

⁴⁶ Dickens 51, 630.

⁴⁷ Dickens 12.

⁴⁸ Dickens 550-551.

⁴⁹ Dickens 645-646.

⁵⁰ Dickens 575-576.

⁵¹ Dickens 576-577.

⁵² Dickens 578.

⁵³ Dickens 340.

⁵⁴ Dickens 4.

⁵⁵ Dickens 480.

⁵⁶ Dickens 66.

⁵⁷ Dickens 69.

⁵⁸ Dickens 206.

⁵⁹ Dickens 19.

⁶⁰ Dickens 82.

⁶¹ Dickens 127.

⁶² Dickens 600.

⁶³ Dickens 449.

⁶⁴ Dickens 503.

⁶⁵ Dickens 456, 458.

⁶⁶ Dickens 574.

⁶⁷ Dickens 369.

⁶⁸ Dickens 473.

⁶⁹ Dickens 487.

⁷⁰ Dickens 68.

CONCLUSION

¹ Quoted in Michael Slater's *Charles Dickens* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2009): 363.

² Slater 340.

³ Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1990) 2.

⁴ J. Hillis Miller in his introduction to Dickens's *Bleak House* (London: Penguin, 1853) 14.

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